SUPPLEMENTS TO
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE

*

Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity

The Encounter between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation

*

Edited by
WILLEMIEN OTTEN &
KARLA POLLMANN

BRILL

Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity

Supplements

to

Vigiliae Christianae

Formerly Philosopia Patrum

Texts and Studies of Early
Christian Life and Language

Editors

J. DEN BOEFT – J. VAN OORT – W.L. PETERSEN †
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Mark Vessey is Professor of English and of Later Latin Literature and Culture at the University of British Columbia, where he holds a Canada Research Chair in Literature / Christianity and Culture. A collection of his articles has been published as *Latin Christian Writers in Late Antiquity and their Texts* (Aldershot 2005). He is the co-editor, with Hilmar M. Pabel, of *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' Paraphrases on the New Testament* (Toronto 2002) and, with Karla Pollmann, of *Augustine and the Disciplines: Cassiciacum to 'Confessions'* (Oxford 2005). He recently introduced and annotated Augustine's *Confessions* for Barnes & Noble Classics (New York 2006).

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This volume goes back to a conference organized by Willemien Otten and Karla Pollmann on 'Poetry and Exegesis in Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages', that was held in the splendid surroundings of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS, Wassenaar) in June 2004. The papers in this volume are a combination of a selection from the papers delivered at this conference and two new ones, by Vessey and Chiappiniello, to add to the spectrum of issues tackled.

Our warmest thanks go to the Rector of NIAS, Wim Blockmans, and his dedicated staff for providing ideal support both during the event and its preparation. Such a conference with international and interdisciplinary participants is only possible because of the generous support from various quarters. For financial support we owe gratitude to the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the Fritz von Thyssen-Stiftung and the Leverhulme Trust, all of whose willingness to endorse this project at various stages enabled its smooth progress from inception to completion. For reliable help with the editing process our thanks go to Gerben Roest (Utrecht). Finally, we hope that the thrill we both had in working out exciting bridges between authoritative ancient and medieval texts and the creative process of their interpretation makes the resulting volume a similarly exhilarating experience for our readers.

W.O., Utrecht
K.P., St. Andrews
December 2006

INTRODUCTION

Although you be, as I am, one of those
Who feel a Christian ought to write in prose,
For poetry is magic: born in sin, you
May read it to exorcise the gentile in you.

W.H. Auden[1]

Die dichterische Darstellung war gleichsam nur eine noch weitere Steigerung der Form, ohne daß der Gehalt dadurch ein wesentlich anderer wurde.

("The poetic presentation was practically only a further elaboration of the form, without the content thus being changed in a significant way".)

E. Dümmler[2]

These two quotations reflect two fundamental criticisms uttered from Late Antiquity onwards about the deficient nature of Christian poetry *per se*:[3] first, it was accused of being sinful, that is, standing in the pagan tradition of poetry telling myths that are fictitious and therefore essentially telling lies; it was thus regarded as spoiling the character of the reader. Secondly, the often periphrastic nature of such poems which either paraphrased parts of the Bible and / or other Christian prose works caused them to be viewed as tedious pieces of writing lacking originality and being in some ways rather non-conformist in terms of classical ideas, culminating in the damning verdict by the notable scholar E.R. Curtius of Christian epic as a *genre faux*.[4] This formed the starting point for gathering an international team of scholars from the disciplines of Classics, Theology, Cultural Studies, and History to ana-

[1] W.H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. by E. Mendelson, London 1991, XXXI.

[2] E. Dümmler, *Sigebert's von Gembloux Passio Sanctorum Thebeorum*, Abh. d. Kgl. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin, Phil.-hist. Klasse 1, Berlin 1893, 9.

[3] See the contributions in Part II of this volume.

[4] E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 642. However, there have always been voices that defended Christian poetry (see Westra in this volume) and who claimed a naturally close relationship between the language and expressions of the

lyze the wide range of exegetical techniques employed in Latin poetry, in a conference hosted in the ideal surroundings at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in June 2004. A selection of the papers presented there and two new ones, by Vessey and Chiappiniello, form the content of this volume.

The collected contributions intend to argue against Dümmler, Curtius and others that Christian poetry with its techniques of exegesis and poetic paraphrase did not only bring about a variation of the form but also influenced, partly substantially, the content of the hypotext. They will also take up the challenge posed by Auden that such poetry could, because of its 'magical' qualities, have a stronger protreptic effect than its equivalent prose version. Exegesis involves translating ancient texts (once established) into the desired modern 'receptor language'. It is essentially an analytical and derivative method; for instance, the assumed existence or recognition of a metaphor would lead to its resolution to reveal the hidden meaning beneath it. Poetry uses modes of language deemed adequate to communicate particular views and feelings. It is of a fundamentally synthesizing and original nature; e.g. the use of metaphor, as the very essence of poetry, conveys the quality of the experience behind it.

Especially in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages forms of poetry can be found that incorporate exegetical methods and interpretations as a substantial part of their poetical message, thus adding a potentially heterogeneous quality to it and establishing a specific nature for this genre. Especially in more recent times the condemning judgment of E.R. Curtius about Christian poetry as a generally misconceived genre has been refuted. But despite various thorough and ingenious publications on Christian poetry, partly on a more comprehensive level and partly offering detailed analysis of individual works, there remains still a lot to do in this relatively under-researched area. This is even more the case for the Middle Ages than for Late Antiquity and, to a lesser extent, applies to the pagan poetry of Late Antiquity as well. This volume intends to contribute to this still relatively neglected area of scholarly activity, launching serious research in a new field that invites the combination of traditionally rather separate disciplines (Christian exegesis, poetic theory and interpretation, classical philology).

Bible and of poetry, especially in the Renaissance, see J. Dyck, *Athen und Jerusalem. Die Tradition der argumentativen Verknüpfung von Bibel und Poesie im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1977) 35–41.

To get a wider view of the development and possibilities of the genre, the chosen period ranges from the very beginning of Late Antique poetry at the end of the third century up to the heyday of medieval literature around 1200. The genre of poetry is intentionally conceived in a wide sense as all forms of literature in verse-form. By comparing and contrasting the analytical approach involved in exegesis with the more synthetic approach of poetry, the focus of the contributions will be on the wide range of exegetical techniques as employed in Latin poetry; Greek is occasionally considered by way of comparison with such techniques in Latin poetry. These comprise the interpretative integration of pagan and Christian material, the poetic usage or adaptation of exegetical statements and principles taken from prose treatises or the direct versification of exegetical material as such. Moreover, an important question is whether and, if yes, how poetry added a distinctive level of exegetical sophistication to interpretative possibilities in general, making use of specific poetic possibilities, like the exploitation of allegorical imagery, the blurring of realities, the mix of the fantastic and antiquarian knowledge, the possibility of conflating various exegetical results in one dense poetic statement that is only really understandable if one knows its extensive learned background, etc. Besides the consideration of the intellectual, cultural and social contexts of this poetry that may help to understand specific forms of interpretation employed by it, another investigative criterion for the contributions is that of transformation—either the poetic transformation of earlier pagan and / or Christian material in a given poem, or, especially, the transformation of exegetical modes and mechanisms in poetry from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

The contributions consider a topic within the frame of this theme as outlined above; theoretical reflections or the analysis of other exegetical modes in poetry are taken into account (especially in Part II of the volume), though generally a demonstration in specific poetic texts is included. The impact of ecclesiastical writers like Augustine on later poetical aesthetics, both in theory and in practice, is an integrative part of the argumentation. A few essays reflect on the continuity and change of the poetic genre from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages in this context.

The first part of the volume gathers three articles with a predominantly theoretical focus, that is, how Christians in Late Antiquity responded to the newly rising literary genre of specifically Christian poetry. Westra, by focusing mainly on Augustine, highlights the ambiva-

lent attitude of Christians towards this genre, whose claim of being inspired, creative and pleasurable they found partly hard to reconcile with the tenets of their faith, whereas on the other hand the cognitive and edifying pleasure of poetic exegesis found acceptance. Vessey, in an attempt to complement Westra, highlights a more intellectual side of Christian poetry. Pranger, on the other hand, points out the semantic proximity between Ambrose's poetry and Augustine's prose which overcomes their differences as established along disciplinary lines. He traces the origin of their similarity to a kind of underlying liturgical awareness of the aporias of temporality and recollection.

The central and largest part of the volume deals with individual case studies which are roughly chronologically arranged. Green tackles the earliest biblical epicist, Iuvencus, whose seemingly plain paraphrase of the gospels reveals under close inspection clear exegetical principles informed by Nicene theology. For Iuvencus the text of the gospels is not as important as their dogmatically correct exegesis which he mainly achieves by a technique of omission. This is facilitated by the versification of the biblical text enabling the poet to pass over in silence disapproved heretical exegesis. Den Boeft in his analysis of works by Ambrose emphasizes a position which goes against that of Augustine and Jerome (see Part II): Ambrose regarded *delectatio* ('pleasure') as something cosmologically good, created by God. Therefore, by analogy, lyrical and epideictic *delectatio* was also permissible, even and especially for a Christian, as Ambrose's own successful and innovative output in this area amply demonstrates. Chiappiniello looks at the genre of the 'epithalamium', firmly established in the pagan tradition, and how it gets transformed and spiritualized in a Christian setting. Main features are the close preservation of formal aspects, and the revolution in content which spiritualizes the secular institution of marriage against an ideal of asceticism that is strictly speaking meant to undermine this institution altogether. Hoffmann explores another exegetical technique specifically facilitated by a poetic paraphrase of the biblical text, in his case parts of the Old Testament. By cunningly juxtaposing selected stories from the Old and New Testaments the connection between these two parts of the Bible is didactically made evident and the demands of exegesis inform and dictate the narrative plan. Arweiler uses Dracontius to demonstrate his highly personal exegesis which he makes clear throughout his poetry with his authorial voice. Tommasi Moreschini concentrates on the basically black-and-white ideology of

Corippus which is achieved by the poetic devices of style, imagery and similes. Herren puts the *Ecloga Theoduli* into its tradition of the bucolic eristic poem which is used here to prove the moral superiority of Christianity over pagan mythological thought. The choice of pagan and Christian parallels reveals implicitly the authorial stance. Smolak analyses various poetic techniques in the *Eupolemius*, demonstrating that pagan and Christian traditions are poetically on the same level, but not theologically. As in the case of the *Ecloga Theoduli*, the pagan tradition is still alive but used against its original ideological vein. Otten, finally, probes the stable quality of medieval Christian exegesis. Rather than denigrating it as premodern or freezing it in terms of doctrinal orthodoxy, she sees it as the perfect background allowing creative minds like Peter Abelard's to go against the grain of traditional patterns of interpretation and perform their own actualization of biblical drama.

The final part of the volume is dedicated to investigations which attempt to bridge poetic forms and their development from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Bastiaensen offers an overview over the development of poetic forms used in liturgy and concludes that the combination of the poetry of the Bible and the pagan tradition engendered the Christian poetry of prayer, innovatively ranging across various traditional poetic forms. Müller highlights the conundrum that only the Middle Ages seem to know longer speeches for saints embedded in Christian epics. She suggests as a reason for this that in Late Antiquity the Christian epics as a whole had the function of an *Ersatz* sermon, so that a speech within those epics would have meant an unwelcome reduplication. In the Middle Ages the liturgical place of the poem became more established, so that speeches could now be integrated in an inoffensive manner. Pollmann follows the various poetic paraphrases of the prose *Passio* of the Theban legion from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. She concludes that at least in this case an astonishing stability and continuation of pagan forms can be observed. However regarding the function (or *Sitz im Leben*) of these poets, their pragmatic intention becomes increasingly visible: from elegant advert of a relic finding at the Cathedral of Tours via political advice to a leading aristocratic figure of Carolingian society to the grand declaration of a monastery as a must-see for any self-respecting medieval pilgrim. Dinkova-Bruun offers a magisterial overview of the development of the genre of biblical versifications from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, including also unedited MSS material. As differentiating characteristics marking

the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages she identifies the different choice of metre, the increase in the poems' lengths, the obligatory combination of paraphrases from the Old and the New Testament, universal themes, the expansion of the material with non-biblical and also contemporary material, grandeur and confidence in the poet's attitude. Generally the poetic mode allowed for improved mnemotechnic effects, facilitated the incorporation of diverse learned material, allowed for new ways of presenting biblical stories and finding new meanings in them.

As a conclusion, several specific points of interest may be extrapolated as common results pertaining to all contributions in this volume. There appears to exist a remarkable difference between the handling of Christian and pagan motifs in early Christian and medieval literature, with early Christian authors more concerned about making clear that Christian themes are equally worthy of poetic treatment as pagan topics, and medieval authors various centuries later becoming interested afresh in pagan motifs, coming at them with open eyes and minds, while bringing in creative ideas from a thoroughly Christian(ized) background. The question should be asked how this general point influences the evaluation of individual poems and the appreciation of the use of the poetic genre inside the world of Christian culture.

Then there appears to be considerable difference and tension between poetic aesthetics and Christian ethics. This brings up the question when poetry threatens to become idle allegory, and what kind of ornamentation Christian literature can tolerate at all before it loses its required didactic value? While it is clear that many poets long for the freedom of their trade, it is at the same time clear that they struggle at the same time with the (poetic) license that it seems to afford them, finding it difficult to fit this in with the straightjacket that doctrinal orthodoxy perhaps increasingly presents. Throughout all this it is clear that a crucial role is played by Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in shaping the view of poetry as something inherently dangerous for Christians, and not quite up to the task of moral instruction which is central in his view of Christian culture, both of which points he formulates theoretically in his hermeneutical textbook of *De doctrina christiana*. Contrary to this position in which Augustine is seen as hampering the development of Christian poetry (as opposed to, for instance, Prudentius), however, it can also be argued that Augustine had an enormously liberating effect on ancient literature in the sense that he allowed Christian authors a new freedom to move outside the bounds of classical style, taste, and

conventions. In doing so Augustine opened the door to the development of various new genres of medieval literature, allowing for various cross-influences as well.

Utrecht, W.O.
St. Andrews, K.P.
December 2006

I

THEORY

AUGUSTINE AND POETIC EXEGESIS[1]

H.J. Westra

When one thinks of Augustine in connection with poetry and literary aesthetics, certain topics immediately come to mind, such as his attitudes towards classical literature and rhetoric, as well as their implications for Christian teaching, especially in the *De doctrina christiana*. In fact, these well-known topics have become commonplaces of Augustinian scholarship.[2]

The situation is entirely different for a relatively little explored and problematic subject, namely Augustine's attitude towards the Christian poetry of his own times as practiced by authors such as Paulinus of Nola and Prudentius. Augustine does seem impressed by the liturgical poetry of Ambrose, in particular his evening hymn *Deus creator omnium* to which he refers several times in the *Confessions* (e.g. 9.12.32; 10.35.52; 11.27.35). Non-liturgical poetry fares very differently. Prudentius' hymns are unlikely to have been intended for the liturgy. Instead, the *Cathemerinon* probably represents the birth of Christian lyric poetry as a literary genre, intended to be read rather than performed. Even the more Ambrosian first and second hymns of the *Cathemerinon* were too long and complex for inclusion in the liturgy *in toto*. Yet Prudentius' innovation passed without comment. As things stand now, there is, to my knowledge, no substantive comment on non-liturgical poetry as practiced by his contemporaries in Augustine's writings. Could this possibly be due to the accident of transmission? Augustine was in contact with

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[1] This is a revised version of an article by the same title in Hugo Meynell (ed), *Grace, Politics and Desire: Essays on Augustine*, Calgary 1990, 87–102, noted in the review by P. Horban in *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 33 (1994) 544–549. The argument about Augustine and Christian poetry remains the same.

[2] See for example H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, Stockholm 1967, reviewed by V.D. Connerty in *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970) 223–235; cf. C.P.E. Springer, 'Augustine on Virgil: the Poet as Mendax Vates', *Studia Patristica* 22 (1989) 337–343; S. MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry: Virgil in the Mind of Augustine*, Berkeley 1998; cf. G.A. Mueller, *Formen und Funktionen der Vergilzitate und—anspielungen bei Augustin von Hippo*, Paderborn 2003. For the *De doctrina christiana*, *Bk. 4*, see K. Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus, De doctrina christiana*, Freiburg 1996, and the discussion below.

Prudentius' younger contemporary, Paulinus of Nola, a practicing poet who, in his *Letter to Jovius* (*Ep.* 22), lays out a program for Christian poetics (cf. *Carm.*10, *To Ausonius*). There are letters missing from the correspondence with Paulinus. Is it possible that Augustine never saw nor read the works of Prudentius? The Preface to the collected works of Prudentius has been dated to 404–405 and the individual works are likely to have circulated beforehand. The first datable reference to Prudentius is in Cassian's *Institutiones*, ca. 426. There is no reference to the work of Prudentius in Jerome either. Lavarenne already characterised this non-reception as "curieux". Even if we accept geographical or historical factors as an explanation, still the question arises: how would the Church Fathers have reacted to this completely new poetic-exegetical register? Exploring the various dimensions of this question may contribute to an appreciation of the intellectual climate in which Christian poetry made its first appearance and will clarify its nature and status. This in turn may also help to explain why Christian Latin poets tended to be defensive about their art. For this, we will first address the question how Augustinian aesthetics and the status of the poet in late antiquity would have affected his attitude towards an emerging Christian poetry.[3]

In general, one can posit a basic distrust of artistic creation in the *De doctrina christiana*, combined with a progressive antipathy to secular literature on the part of Augustine. At the same time, however, one can detect, from the earliest works and throughout Augustine's entire oeuvre, an inherent tension or ambivalence in his attitude towards *poiesis* and to one of its basic elements, aesthetic pleasure, which needs to be explored before his attitude towards the Christian poetry of his time can be evaluated properly. I shall begin with an examination of the negative pole in this tension-laden field. The inherent ambivalence in Augustine's thought towards artistic creation and its reception through the aesthetic experience can be attributed in part to the Platonic legacy of artistic representation as a form of mimesis. If we add Plato's statements about the divine inspiration of the prophet, the mystic and the poet as manifestations of divine madness in the *Phaedrus* (265A–B), as well as the exclusion of the traditional poets from the ideal state in the

[3] P. Courcelle, 'Les lacunes de la correspondance entre Saint Augustin et Paulin de Nole', *Revue des Etudes Anciennes* 53 (1951) 253–300; M. Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 1: *Cathemerinon liber*, Paris 1943, xvi. The first reference to Prudentius as a "classic" is by Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 2.9, ca. 461–467.

Republic, the fundamental ambiguity of the Platonic legacy for Augustine, and for western civilization in general, is complete. Of course, Neoplatonist aesthetics evolved. Whereas Plato, in the context of Bk. 10 of the *Republic*, downgrades artistic activity because its mimetic product is twice removed from ideal reality and beauty, Plotinus already reduces that distance by claiming that Pheidias, when sculpting the image of Zeus at Olympia, must have had some inkling of the Idea of the divine for his artistic creation (*Enneads* 5.8). By the time of Proclus, Socrates' statement about the divine inspiration of the poets in the *Ion* (533E–535A) was taken literally rather than ironically as it was probably intended in the context of that dialogue. But if anything, the exalted status of the poets as hierophants in late antiquity may have alienated Augustine even more, since it made poetry a rival to Scripture and its revelation, as it had in his own life right up to conversion.[4]

Augustine's ambivalence towards the aesthetic experience in particular lies in the nature of the experience itself which oscillates between the cognitive and the sensuous aspects of beauty. As a result, according to Jauss, "both the highest dignity and the most serious defect could be deduced … [The aesthetic experience] could be denied all cognitive use and all ethical seriousness and be roundly condemned when the negative functions of mimesis—second-order imitation, deception through sensuous experience, pleasure in a-moral objects—were adduced."[5]

Augustine acknowledges the beauty of earthly phenomena, but relegates them to the purely sensory realm in the following statement from the *Confessions* (2.5.10):

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[4] Augustine's distrust of artistic creation has long been recognised: see for example B. Capelle, 'Augustinus', *RAC* 1 (1950) 983 who refers to *De doctr. chr.* 4.30–31. See also E.P. Meyering, *Augustinus über Schöpfung, Ewigkeit und Zeit: Das elfte Buch der Bekenntnisse*, Leiden 1979, 24–26, with reference to Neoplatonist aesthetics. For a recent article on Plato see Walter G. Leszl, 'Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts and the Origins of Aesthetics', *Etudes Platoniciennes* 1 (2004) 113–197. Eric Ross, in a paper entitled 'Poetic Epistemology and the Platonic Muse' presented at the annual conference of the Classical Association of Canada (Banff 2004), argues that Plato constructs himself as a poetic Muse revealing divinely inspired wisdom. For Plotinus and Proclus, see Meyering (above) and A.S. Preminger, et al. *Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism*: *Translations and Interpretations*, New York 1974, 227–233 and 310–313, respectively.

[5] H.-R. Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. M. Shaw, introd. W. Godzich, Minneapolis 1982, 36–38.

> There is truly a sightliness in beautiful bodies, in gold and silver and all things. In the realm of tactual sensations, congruity is the most important. And in each of the other senses there is its own agreeable quality. Nevertheless, one must not depart from Thee, O Lord, nor deviate from Thy law, in all these objects of desire. Even the life which we live here possesses its own appeal, arising from a mode of beauty which is its own and from a suitableness in relation to all these lower things of beauty.[6]

Underlying this view is the notion that the only perfect beauty is in God, and that it is only from the soul's contemplation of the divine that true and legitimate enjoyment are derived (cf. *Conf.* 10.27.38; *De libero arbitrio* 2.38; *Ep.*147.4). At the same time, a basic fear is expressed, namely that earthly beauty is prone to lead men away from God into error. Fundamental to this lapsarian view of earthly beauty is a distinction between sensible and intelligible beauty. Already in the *De ordine* (2.14.39) Augustine writes that reason is impeded by the senses in its desire for true beauty: *Desiderabat enim* [scil. ratio] *pulchritudinem, quam sola et simplex posset sine oculis intueri; impediebatur a sensibus*. Augustine, like Plato (*Phaedrus* 249E–250C), is deeply suspicious of pleasure that is related to the senses, because it is likely to divert from the soul's contemplation of the divine involving legitimate pleasure, even rapture, derived from cognition. In other words, he does not eliminate pleasurable cognition or cognitive pleasure, but he wants to separate them very strictly from sensuous pleasure. Of course, affective sense experience and cognition cannot be separated in this way, and Augustine attempts to address this problem in the *Confessions* (10.33–35; cf. *De doctr. chr.* 1.33.37) where *fruitio* or enjoyment is divided into a legitimate and an illegitimate use of the senses, the one turned towards God, the other towards the world. But even the legitimate enjoyment of the senses is always in danger of sliding into self-enjoyment and of "abandoning itself to the aesthetic attractions of a sensuous experience that is heightened by …means of the arts."[7] Marrou speaks of Augustine's aversion to the "fallacious magic of aesthetic sensation" and of his desire to "transcend" the aesthetic experience and to "pass from art to science." Yet the despised bodily senses at the same time provide the model for his description of their spiritual counterparts, whose pleasure is expressed in physical terms in the *Confessions*(10.6.8):

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[6] V.J. Bourke, trans., *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, The Fathers of the Church 21, New York 1953, 41.

[7] Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience* (above, note 4) 24.

> Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God—a light, voice, odour, food, embrace of my inner man where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part.[8]

In other words, Augustine, at his most poetic, has at hand a model for mediation of the spiritual through the physical in language, which could have validated Christian poetry, as we have it in Prudentius, *Cath.* 5.105–124, for example. Marrou notes the violent rejection of literature as an aesthetic activity in the *De doctrina christiana* where he remarks that, to Augustine, the thought that literary form and beauty could be justified per se was anathema. His judgement is accurate and incisive: *Nous retrouvons ici la rigide subordination de toutes les manifestations de l'esprit à la fin religieuse qui domine toute la culture augustinienne.*[9] Augustine even goes as far as wishing to suppress the aesthetic element in the liturgy: "At times, in fact, I could eagerly desire that all the sweet melody of the chants whereby the Psalter of David is accompanied, were banished from my ears and from the whole Church" (*Conf.* 10.33.50).[10] Yet, famously, he relates how deeply moved he was by the singing of hymns in Church at the time of his baptism (*Conf.* 9.6.14 – 9.7.15). His own Latin prose style in the *Confessions* is profoundly and movingly lyrical.[11] Again, how Platonic and how characteristic of the repressiveness of metaphysical constructs! This outlook was the basis of Augustine's vehement rejection of poetry, the foundation of pagan culture which to him appeared empty in content and obsessed with aesthetic effects. The same outlook may well have affected his attitude towards Christian poetry which was indissolubly linked to it by a shared late-antique aesthetic.

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[8] Cf. Margaret R. Miles, *Desire and Delight: A New Reading of Augustine's Confessions*, New York 1992, 36–37, 56–57, 103–105.

[9] H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Paris 1938, 510. For Marrou and other relevant evaluations see R.J. O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St Augustine*, Cambridge, Mass. 1978, 2.

[10] Significantly, the Hutterites, an Anabaptist sect, consciously avoid melody and practice monotony in their singing. Augustine's puritanism has a protestant ring to it.

[11] Augustine also enjoyed the melodies of his native North Africa: see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, new edition, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2000, 255. His unparalleled lyricism may well derive from his connection with Punic / Berber culture and song. For Augustine's African background see Lucien Borg, o.s.a, 'Augustin l'Africain', Conférence donnée au Centre Diocésain, Oran, 19 mars 1992.

Against this repression we can adduce the notion of the aesthetic experience as a voluntary act. Augustine's position is a clear demonstration of the difficulty of separating objective and subjective elements of the aesthetic experience, in life and in philosophy.[12] Kant's notion of 'disinterested' pleasure comes to mind as a solution. 'Pure' aesthetic pleasure need not necessarily be an abandonment of the self in sensuous pleasure, but rather involves the distancing of the aesthetic object from the self as something other.[13] As Jauss points out, it is Augustine who first introduced the notion of self-indulgence in the area of the aesthetic experience and cognition through his concepts of *voluptas* and *curiositas*, with far-reaching consequences for Christian culture and, in particular, for Christian poetry.[14] And how Augustine agonizes over what is legitimate enjoyment and where pleasure useful to cognition ends and indulgence begins (*Conf.* 10.33)! This predicament hinges on his epistemological position that man can achieve truth exempt from error, on condition that he seek truth not in the sensible, but in the intelligible realm.[15]

Of course, one also has to keep the historical context in mind.[16] At the time, pagan culture and the cult of the Muses still figured as a dangerous rival of the new religion. The pagan Volusianus and his associates were enthusiastic about classical poetry and rhetoric (Augustine, *Ep.* 132, 135), reminding Augustine of his association with the latter. Volusianus even refers to Augustine's accomplishments in poetry "as a part of eloquence", which has been taken as a reference to his discussion of classical metres in the *De musica*, a treatise intended by Augustine for those 'regrettably' still dedicated to secular literature (*De mus.* 6.1). Pagan culture was carried by a literature that, in late antiquity, served as a spiritual refuge for the educated elite. Augustine rejects this quasi-salvation on the epistemological point that its object of knowledge is false or empty. Sabine MacCormack has demonstrated once more, in connection with Vergil, how Augustine finally rejects these "shadows from hell", including their pagan allegorical interpretation.[17] In the *De doctrina christiana* Augustine settles for a willful literalist reading of Vergil,

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[12] See Wlad Godzich's Introduction to Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience* (above, note 5) xxxix.

[13] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Section 1, Bk. 1, par. 5 and 12; cf. Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience* (above, note 5) 14.

[14] Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience* (above, note 5) 23–24.

[15] Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 234, n. 2; 255–287.

[16] Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 345–350.

[17] S. MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry* (above, note 2),142, n. 36; cf. August.

and rejects higher meaning as seen by Servius. In addition to its nefarious aesthetic lure, pagan literature is found to be lacking in truth (*Conf.* 1.13.22). Learned pagans will admit, he says, that Aeneas never came to Carthage! Two issues are involved here: first, the old charge that the poets, including Homer and Hesiod, are liars, a claim that goes back to Heraclitus and to Plato; secondly, a willful misunderstanding of the nature of fiction in the *De doctrina christiana* (2.16.26 – 17.27) where Augustine rejects fiction's 'reasonable lies' to which he earlier admitted cognitive and aesthetic usefulness (*Soliloquies* 2.11.19; 2.9.16; cf. *De ord.* 2.14.40).[18]

As is well known,[19] the charges against Homer and Hesiod, which mainly rest on a lack of understanding of the primitive material they dealt with, led to the allegorical interpretation of their writings as early as the sixth century B.C., a practice that ultimately turned them into crypto-philosophical gospels at the hands of the Cynics and the Stoics. Also, the fact that Plato himself used philosophical allegories or myths to express the ineffable raised the epistemological status of such fictions in late antiquity to exalted heights. Augustine's contemporary Macrobius can claim that the highest truths are, at one and the same time, concealed and revealed in these fabulous narratives. The ancient poets are actually called, and treated as, theologians. Their status, by late antiquity, had been raised to that of divinely inspired hierophants, prophets, conduits of divine truth, by analogy with the role of the priests of the mystery religions. The reverence for Vergil is a good example, and Augustine's attack on Vergil is not fortuitous. In the fourth century the old charge of the mendacity of the poets must have sounded very deliberately sacrilegious. It may have been necessitated by a perception of the poets as rivals to the O.T. prophets. It further displays a profound, almost willful, misunderstanding of the poet's work on the part of Augustine, who, incidentally, totally succumbed to its aesthetic lure and its fictions as a youth. Indeed, the vehemence on this score noted by Marrou shows all the signs of the recent convert.

Ep. 7.7, and see Springer, 'Augustine on Virgil' (above, note 2) 337–343 for a possible exception to the Augustinian notion of the poet as liar in *Sermon* 105.

[18] MacCormack, *Shadows of Poetry* (above, note 17) 53, 63–64.

[19] See for example J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: les origins grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*, Paris 1986, 93–111; Macrobius, *Comm. In Somnium Scipionis* 1.2.9–18.; cf. H.J. Westra, *The Commentary on Martianus Capella's 'De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii' Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, Toronto 1986, 27–28 for the most daring justification of secular allegory in the Middle Ages.

O'Connell has suggested several reasons for Augustine's literal-mindedness: the lingering, pejorative identification of poetry with *techne* or craft; his training in literature under the grammarians and their cerebral, mechanical dissection of poetic texts (*De ord.* 2.14.40); and his theory of signification. According to this theory (*De ord.* 2.34), Augustine implicitly presupposes that the function of words is the same in poetry as in prose.[20] Words are useful and necessary for communication, but they are only a means, without intrinsic value. Also in the *De ordine* (2.4.13) Augustine would like to purge poetry of its ornaments, which he calls *nugae*, the very term he uses to characterize the "trifles" that kept him back from conversion, possibly including the Muses of classical literature (*Conf.* 8.11.26). He proposes the following: translate poetry into prose and everybody will agree that this ridiculous stuff is only good for the theatre (*De ord.* 2.4.13). The fact that there may be a connection between form and content, genre and style, medium and message, totally and deliberately escapes him here (but not so in the *De doctrina christiana*, Bk. 4). The closest Augustine comes to underwriting the classical dictum that poetic fiction should delight and instruct is when he says: *Fabula est compositum ad utilitatem delectationemue mendacium* in the *Soliloquies* (2.11.19; cf. *De ord.* 2.14.40) but, as already pointed out, he ultimately rejects even its useful mendacity. At the same time, Augustine was fully aware of the fact that the parables of the N.T. were fictions and so he actually had at his disposal a concept of legitimate figurative speech (*Quaest. Evang.* 2.51). In other words, Augustine did have a theoretical model for accepting fiction as a vehicle of truth (e.g. Prudentius' *Psychomachia*), but the question remains if he would have been prepared to extend its application to a non-biblical Christian narrative. Philosophy is to be preferred (*Contra Academicos* 3.1) and he asks himself and his readers the leading question whether Plato was right after all in expelling the poets from his ideal state: *An forte Graeco Platoni potius palma danda est, qui cum ratione formaret, qualis esse civitas debeat, tamquam adversarios veritatis, poetas censuit urbe pellendos?* (*De civ.* 2.14.1; cf. *De civ.* 2.8). This might be taken as the final word on the subject, the exclusion of the poets from the Christian commonwealth. Yet there are two more aspects to this question, the first being the famous Augustinian notion that truth, wherever it is found, is God's truth, the oft-cited passage from *De doctrina christiana* 2.18.28 (cf. 2.40.60):

[20] O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence* (above, note 9), 30, 31, 36–37; cf. Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 349, n. 3.

> But we should not think that we ought not to learn literature because Mercury is said to be its inventor, nor that because the pagans dedicated temples to Justice and Virtue and adored in stones what should be performed in the heart, we should therefore avoid justice and virtue. Rather, every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's.

Here we see Augustine at his most liberal, intent on saving from pagan culture, including its literature, whatever it had in terms of *utilitas*. This appears to involve a dispensation, albeit severely restricted, of the cognitive element in the aesthetic experience of pagan literature. The second aspect involves Augustine's own preoccupation with establishing a Christian aesthetic in the *De doctrina christiana*. Together, these two aspects can be thought to constitute the positive role in Augustine's ambivalence towards the aesthetic experience, to which we now turn.

In his creation of an aesthetic for Christian rhetoric, Augustine inevitably had to come to terms with the same basic issues that arose from pagan poetry, namely the moral and epistemological problem posed by rhetorical and stylistic artifice, fiction, and aesthetic pleasure. First of all, and most relevant to the topic of this paper, is the fact that he does not mention non-liturgical Christian poetry at all in the *De doctrina christiana*, Bk 4. This in itself is an indication of the embarrassment it must have posed for Augustine. His own poetic efforts were restricted to very simple, functional genres, namely a brief epitaph, the *Versus de S. Nabore*, and the abcdarian *Psalm Against the Donatists*, a didactic poem in rhythmical rather than quantitative verse. He also refers to what may have been a liturgical poem of his own in praise of the Easter candle (*De civitate Dei* 15.22).[21] In fact, Augustine only concerns himself with prose in the *De doctrina christiana*, Bk. 4, and the entire discussion is put in terms of rhetoric. In itself, he argues, rhetoric is neither good nor bad: it depends on what use it is put to. If it serves the truth, it is legitimate. And if it is used in the service of error by the pagans, why should the Christian teacher forego the power of this value-free vehicle in the service of truth? Yet even in the right cause, the enjoyment of its use for its own sake leads to error (*De doctr. chr.* 4.5.7).[22] The latter position is actually quite close to the classical notion expressed by Cicero at the beginning of the *De inventione*, namely that eloquence and wisdom need to be combined, an ideal that Martianus

[21] Cf. Brown, *Augustine* (above, note 11) 23, n. 9 and 325.
[22] Cf. Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 508–514.

Capella was thought to have presented in the quasi-religious allegory of the marriage of Mercury and Philology.

Equally classical is the reference by the former teacher of rhetoric to the three *genera dicendi: docere, delectare*, and *movere*. As Herzog has argued, Augustine is able to translate *docere* and *movere* without any problem into Christian terms as teaching the gospel and moving the faithful to action in accordance with it; but *delectare* "leads to a barely concealed embarrassment".[23] In the *De doctrina christiana* (4.25.55) it is subordinated to the other two *genera*, and it is to be used "discreetly". For the role of *delectatio* in general, he only has scorn: "To the art of pleasing those whose pampered tastes truth does not satisfy, if it is presented in any other than an agreeable one, no small place has been assigned in eloquence" (*De doctr. chr*. 4.13.29). *Delectare* finally finds its subordinate place in oratory when Augustine asserts that the Christian orator, when he is urging that something be put into practice, must not only teach in order to instruct, and finally persuade in order to be victorious, but also *please* in order to hold the attention of his listeners (*De doctr. chr*. 4.13.29; cf. 4.2.3; 4.5.7). Recently, Carol Harrison has attempted to show how this delight "occasioned by Scripture or the preacher" is a sacred, redemptive delight: … "What ultimately matters is not the aesthetic form, the words themselves, or the style used, but their content, their meaning, their intention or inspiration, and this can only be found in God himself".[24] In this way, Harrison is able to separate form from content—in a way that escaped Augustine himself—and posit a distinctive Christian aesthetic as the basis of a unique Christian community, identity, and culture enunciated in the *De doctrina christiana*, Bk. 4. If this were the case, Augustine would have had yet another reason for accepting Christian poetry. Karla Pollmann detects an "anti- or meta-rhetorical" bias and argues that Augustine transforms the formalistic, late-antique concept of *delectatio* from a purely rhetorical term to refer to the ethical charge and substance of Christian discourse.[25] Along similar lines, Gerhard Mueller discerns a new *Wahrheitsaesthetik* in Bk. 4.[26]

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[23] R. Herzog, 'Exegese–Erbauung–Delectatio: Beiträge zu einer christlichen Poetik der Spätantike', in W. Haug, ed. *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie*, Stuttgart 1979, 52–69, esp. 56. Cf. B. Studer, '*Delectare et prodesse*. Zu einem Schlüsselwort der patristischen Exegese', in *Mémorial Jean Gribomont* (Studia Ephemeridis "Augustinianum" 27) Rome 1988, 555–581.

[24] C. Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, Oxford 2000, 226.

[25] Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana* (above, note 2) 235–241.

[26] Mueller, *Vergilzitate* (above, note 2) 167–179.

Augustine's horror of rhetorical excess, even in the service of the right cause, is particularly evident in one of his letters where he describes how once he got involved in a debate with the Donatist bishop of Thubursicum, Fortunius, and how most of the citizens crowded together not for their salvation, but as if for a gladiatorial battle between two great rhetoricians.[27]

Then there was the problem of 'difficult passages' in the Old Testament, where the literal or historical sense was barely defensible in the light of Christian charity. Ironically, here Augustine's solution was to make an aesthetic virtue out of an apparent hermeneutic vice by calling obscurity figurative discourse and by elevating it to a principle of beauty. The obscurity of the biblical text becomes the source of its fecundity, its richness of meanings, and its beauty. It is the pleasurable task of the exegete to extract its meanings through allegorical interpretation, 'the' hermeneutic tool for resolving real or supposed obscurity (Cf. *De doctr. chr.* 2.6.7–8). In the hands of Augustine and his predecessors this type of interpretation becomes a creative activity that reconstitutes the biblical text cognitively, leaving the exegete quite rapturous in the process. As Marrou observes, the allegorical interpretation of the Bible is a form of poetry, i.e. an imaginative and creative activity. At the same time, this form of poetic exegesis of an authoritative but obscure text, yielding cognitive pleasure, is similar to the allegorical interpretation of Homer and Vergil: both are expressions of the same mentality.[28] In actual practice, the separation of beautiful form from meaningful context was as impossible in poetry as in exegesis.

To sum up the positive aspects of Augustine's attitude towards the aesthetic experience, it can be said that, as for pagan literature, he would allow that some truth might be hidden beneath its fictions, artifice and sensory-affective quality, but this concession is immediately neutralized by his desire to strip this literature of precisely these elements. As far as the aesthetic element in Christian literature is concerned, it has been firmly subordinated to didactic purposes in prose preaching and it has been reduced to a supposedly purely cognitive affair in exegesis.

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[27] See *Ep.* 44.1.1 and cf. *De doctr. chr.* 4.24.53 for the legitimate use of the grand style; compare Jerome, in Harrison, *Augustine* (above, note 24) 56.

[28] Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 478–491, esp. 488–489, and 494–495; cf. H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*: *les quatre sens de l'Ecriture* 1, Paris 1959, 119–128.

This state of affairs does not bode well for Augustine's attitude towards the sophisticated Christian poetry of his own times, to which we now turn. The main problem, clearly, lay in the fact that Christian poetry was, by necessity, based on pagan models. The Vergilian cento as practiced by Proba and others was rejected as naïve and transgressive by Jerome (*Ep.* 53.7).[29] The attitude of the Christian poets of the period themselves towards their classical models is perhaps best summed up in a letter from Paulinus of Nola to his brother Jovius (*Ep.* 16.11, *ca.* 400 A.D.):

> Let it be enough to you to have taken from them their fluency of speech and verbal adornment, like spoils taken from enemy arms, so that stripped of their errors and clothed in their eloquence you may adapt to the fullness of reality the sheen of eloquence used by empty wisdom to deceive. Thus you may adorn not the empty body of unreality but the full body of truth, and ponder thoughts which are not merely pleasing to human ears, but also to the benefit of human minds.[30]

This position presents a Christian transformation of the classical dictum that literature should instruct as well as delight, supported by the Augustinian dispensation for rhetoric used in the right cause. The metaphor of the captive spoils is an adaptation of Augustine's own allegorical interpretation of the taking of gold and silver by the Israelites from their Egyptian captivity as a precept for salvaging what truth there is in pagan philosophy (*De doctr. chr.* 2.40.60–61). The clothing imagery used by Paulinus to characterize rhetoric as a veil of words conveying a more substantial, inner meaning, is also very Augustinian. On the whole, then, the pagan models did not present a problem to Paulinus, if properly approached in accordance with Augustine's precepts. But there is an important difference as well, namely the ready acceptance of the combination of the *dulce et utile*, the *delectare et prodesse* so problematic in Augustine.

Augustine's precept in the *De doctr. chr.* (2.40.60–61) to take from pagan culture what is useful reads like an encouragement to practice allegorical interpretation of pagan literature and mythology in the manner of Lactantius. Initially, Augustine seems to have favoured the use of allegory to save what truth there is (*Contra Academicos* 3.5.6). He

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[29] K. Smolak, '*Maro mutatus in melius*? Zum Phänomen des literarischen Zitierens in der christlich-lateinischen Spätantike', in O. Panagl and R. Wodak, eds. *Text und Kontext: Theoriemodelle und methodische Verfahren im transdisziplinären Vergleich*, Würzburg 2004, 51–66, esp. 56–61.

[30] P.G. Walsh, trans. *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola* 1, New York 1966, 162.

even encourages allegorical representation as a creative methodology in the *De ordine* (1.8.24), where he urges the pagan poet Licentius to transform the story of Pyramus and Thisbe into an allegory of pure love in which two souls, enhanced by learning and virtue, are joined in understanding through philosophy, thereby escaping death in the enjoyment of eternal life. In his *Retractations*, Augustine regrets having referred Licentius to the Muses (*Retract.* 1.3.2; cf. *Contra Acad.* 3.1). And in the *De doctrina christiana* (3.7.11–3.8.12) Augustine explicitly rejects pagan poetic practice in reference to the following lines by an unknown poet:

> O Father Neptune, whose hoary temples crowned resound with
> The noisy sea, from whose beard eternally flows
> The vast Ocean, and in whose hair the rivers wander…

He goes on to characterize this late-antique gem as follows: "This pod shakes rattling beans inside an agreeable husk. Yet, this is not food for men, but for swine".[31] Augustine's position is not restricted to a rejection of pagan allegorical poetry because of its content, but extends to a shared late-antique aesthetic found objectionable even in bishop Cyprian's flowery prose (*De doctr. chr.* 4.14.31).[32] Again, this attitude did not bode well for Christian poetry based as it was on pagan models for its rhetorical artifice, mythological thematics and ornamentation, and its highly charged, late-antique affect. The only exception may be when the poet Licentius is urged to abandon his worldly poetry and to learn humility from Paulinus of Nola (*Ep.* 26). Yet the reference is so general, that it could hardly be taken as an endorsement of Paulinus' poetry.

Herzog[33] has shown how, in contrast with Augustine, Jerome enthusiastically envisions the potential for a Christian literary aesthetic upon receiving the (lost) Theodosius panegyric attributed to Paulinus of Nola. Probably the most poetic of all prose genres, the panegyric inspires Jerome to the following vision (*Ep.* 58):

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[31] Cf. Luke, 15.16.

[32] Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 348–350 speaks of the 'radical sensuality' of classical poetry. Despite Augustine's opposition, the Christianising allegorical interpretation of pagan poetry and mythology eventually became very successful, but always required justification. Cf. H.J. Westra, 'The Allegorical Interpretation of Myth: Its Origins, Justification and Effect', in A. Welkenhuysen, H. Braet and W. Verbeke, eds. *Mediaeval Antiquity*, Leuven 1995, 277–291. For a discussion of Augustine's practice of allegory see Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 488–494; J. Pépin, 'Saint Augustin et la function protreptique de l'allégorie', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (1958) 243–286; and Harrison (above, note 24) 81–95.

[33] Herzog, 'Exegese' (above, note 23) 60.

> O! If only I could lead natural ability of this kind not only amongst the Aeonian mounts and the summits of Helicon, as the poets say, but amongst Sion, Thabor, and Sinai and the peaks of the Scriptures; if only it was given to me to teach what I have learned, and to deliver from my hands the mysteries of the prophets, there would be born to us something learned Greece never had!

Recommending the veiled allegorical discourse of the Scriptures as a *propaedeusis* for poetic Christian discourse, Jerome goes on to say:

> If you had [the Scriptures] as your foundation or if [they] served as the finishing touch, we would have nothing more beautiful, nothing more learned, nothing more Latin than your books.

And finally, in a Christian transformation of the Ciceronian ideal of the combination of eloquence and wisdom, Jerome exclaims:

> If your prudence and eloquence were to be combined with a study or understanding of the Scriptures, I would see you in very short time occupying a place on the Capitol amongst our great authors…

Clearly, what Jerome envisions here is a combination of poetics and exegesis, of doctrine and aesthetics.[34] He also envisions this new Christian literature as something totally original, dismissing the Vergilian centos of the biblical narrative as puerile (*Ep.* 53.7; cf. Aug., *De civ.* 17.15). Yet the context of the letter is prose: poetry is not specifically mentioned. Jerome's attitude towards Christian poetry may have been equally jaundiced by his problematic relationship with classical literature. "What", he famously asks himself, "has Horace to do with the Psalter, Vergil with the Gospels and Cicero with the Apostle?" (*Ep.* 22.29.6–7).[35] But at least he is able to imagine a Christian literary practice that combines the beautiful and the good.

As Jan den Boeft points out in 'Ambrosius lyricus' in this volume, Ambrose seems to have had the most positive attitude towards the imagination, the senses, and the body as divinely created, being able to see *delectatio* not only as sinful and diabolical, but also as a foretaste of and incentive towards eternal bliss (*Explan. Ps.* XII.1.1). Possibly for the same reason Ambrose seems to have been at ease in his creative role as a hymnodist, arriving at a poetic practice that does not problematise the relationship between aesthetics and religion. In this context it is also

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[34] Herzog, 'Exegese' (above, note 23) 55, n. 27.

[35] See also Jerome, *Ep.* 21.13: *Daemonum cibus est carmina poetarum* and cf. Harrison, *Augustine* (above, note 24) 56.

significant that it was Ambrose who taught Augustine to read the Bible figuratively, i.e. creatively and poetically, freeing him from the confusion of signifier and signified that marks the literalist.

Given this reception by Augustine and Jerome, one is left to wonder about the impact of their attitudes on Christian poetry. The work of Prudentius, which represents the most complete integration of Christian doctrine and pagan rhetoric in its poetic transformation of patristic exegesis, was passed over in silence by both. In sharp contrast, as Herzog has demonstrated, the significant post-Augustinian poetic work of the fifth and sixth centuries involves biblical paraphrases that clearly separate the *narratio* of the biblical narrative from the unadorned patristic exegesis following it.[36] In Sedulius and Arator the *dulce* and *utile*, *delectatio* and *aedificatio*, poetry and exegesis, have effectively been separated.

What are the reasons for this separation of poetic and exegetical functions? Is it possible that the poetic transformation of exegesis was perceived by Augustine especially as methodologically and even doctrinally unsound or, combined with its aesthetic appeal, as a potential rival to patristic *auctoritas*? Since there is no positive evidence, the answer to the problem is by necessity based on an argument *e silentio*. However, the suggestion of a possible quarrel of the theologian with the poet may not altogether be unreasonable, especially because of the actual poetic use / appropriation of exegesis. Prudentius provides the clearest case in point. Thoroughly familiar with patristic interpretations, the poet selects, combines, and weaves them together for his own thematic, structural, and aesthetic purposes in creative works of Christian literature, modifying these interpretations in the process. One example as elucidated by Herzog[37] will suffice, namely the poet's development of the figure of the devil in the *Hamartigeneia* (126–202).

Already identified with the serpent of Genesis in patristic exegesis, the devil's appearance and nature are expanded by the identification with Marcion's god of evil. Moving from the classical image of the snake-wreathed head of a Gorgon or Fury (*Ham.* 130; cf. *Aeneid* 7.445–

[36] Herzog, 'Exegese' (above, note 23) 58–62. M. Roberts, *The Jewelled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Ithaca and London 1989, 142 writes that Sedulius and Arator avoided the ornate style; cf. ibid. 30–34. For biblical epic as genre see K. Smolak, 'Die Bibeldichtung als verfehlte Gattung', in F. Stella, ed. *La scrittura infinita: Bibbia e poesia in età medievale e umanistica*, Florence 2001, 15–29, esp. 25.

[37] R. Herzog, *Die allegorische Dichtkunst des Prudentius*, Munich 1966, 94–96; Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 348, n. 1.

451) to the devious trapper and hunter Nimrod (Genesis 10.8–9), the conception of the devil is made fully anthropomorphic. At the same time his metamorphosis into a serpent is explained through a correspondence in appearance before and after, in the manner of pagan physical allegory: Lucifer's originally tall, straight, and smooth shape is changed into the corresponding horizontal, base, slippery form of a snake as a result of his envy of mankind (*Ham.* 186–203). In this way, different elements of Scripture and exegesis are connected with each other through pagan imagery and pagan allegory, creating a truly new and original representation but also a rather eclectic re-mythologisation. This is the product of creative re-imagining resulting from the fusion of allegorical representation with exegesis on the one hand, and of biblical, classical and Christian myths on the other.

As a result, poetic exegesis poses the following questions: does it, in effect, constitute a separate register of exegesis? And in what aesthetic / hermeneutic space does it operate? One solution to this essential problem is associated with the Canadian scholar Northrop Frye. In his *Great Code*, Frye presents an approach to the Bible as literary text, an attitude that radically validates the mytho-poietic over the historical and the theological, reaching beyond faith to vision.[38] It is only through the imagination that we can make contact with the (poetic) vision that (re-)creates the world. As important as the image is to Augustine, he clearly cannot conceive of the language and image-making capacity of fallen man as redemptive, *pace* Harrison.[39] Frye's essentially Romantic hypostasis of the poetic imagination and the concomitant idea of Scripture as literature and God as poet are far removed indeed from Augustine's horizon of expectation.

Another possible reason for Augustine's non-reception may have been the way Prudentius perceived his role and that of his Christian poetry. He did not characterise himself primarily as a new Psalmist, as one might have expected from a Christian hymnodist and from *Cath.* 9.4–5. Instead, and in programmatic fashion, Prudentius combines two allegorical passages from the New Testament (John 14.2–3: My father's house has many mansions, etc., and 2 Tim. 2.20–21: In any great house

[38] N. Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, Toronto 1982, 232. Augustine's procédé actually resembles that of the artist, according to John O'Meara, 'Augustine and the Artist and the *Aeneid*', in: *Mélanges offerts à Mademoiselle Christine Mohrmann*, Utrecht 1963, 252–261.

[39] Harrison (above, note 24) 224–226.

there are not only utensils of gold and silver, but also of wood or earthenware: cf. 2 Cor. 4.7) to represent and to characterise the role of the Christian poet in the Epilogue to his collected works:

> In the rich man's house there are many furnishings set in every corner; there is the shining golden cup, and the basin of bronze finely wrought is there, and the earthenware pot, and the heavy, broad tray of silver; there are pieces made of ivory, and some hollowed out of oak or elm. There is a use of every vessel fitted for the master's service, for the house is furnished both with things that cost a great price and things made of wood. As for me, in his Father's house Christ fits me, as a poor, outworn vessel, for transitory services, and suffers me to keep a place in a corner. You see me do but the office of earthenware in the court of salvation; yet it is good to have rendered even the lowest service to God.[40]

This novel and daring use of Scripture to formulate poetic purpose fundamentally changes classical modesty *topoi* and the role of the poet in Horace, *Carm.* 2 by combining a sense of self-worth and even pride in the service of God with Christian humility.[41] However, the most striking presentation of the role of the Christian poet is to be found at the end of Prudentius' poetic hagiography of Eulalia, a saint of his native Spain (*Peristephanon* 4.197–200):

> Cast yourself down along with me, noble city, on the holy graves, you and all your people; then, when the saints' souls and bodies rise again, you and all your people will follow them.

Here the poet presents himself as the leader of the chorus offering a hymn at the martyr's grave, but also as a religious celebrant (cf. *Cath.* 5.155–156 and 10.117–140), since the tomb may also serve as an altar for the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus he leads the community of the faithful in a prayer for salvation, like a priest. Poetry has become a means of salvation, not just for the poet, but for mankind.

Against the background of the exalted status of the antique poet as *vates* or divinely inspired hierophant, Prudentius could also be thought to present the Christian poet as a prophet or apostle delivering salvation through his art. Clearly, this view of the poet's role and of his

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[40] H.J. Thomson, trans. *Prudentius* 2, Cambridge, Mass. 1953, 373–375.

[41] For other interpretations of the Epilogue see K. Thraede, *Studien zu Sprache und Stil des Prudentius*, Göttingen 1965, 21–78, esp. 71–78; Herzog, *Die allegorische Dichtkunst* (above, note 37) 119–122; M. Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination*, Princeton 1976, 29–108. See also K. Smolak, 'Überlegungen zum Epilogus des Prudentius' in *Alvarium: Festschrift für Christian Gnilka*, Münster 2002, 325–334 for a discussion of the relationship between Epilogue and its base text, Horace's *Carm.* 2.

poetry was not recognised in his own time. It would take another thousand years before this vision of salvation poetry was realised by Dante. For if we follow Auerbach, Dante can be thought to have solved the problem of Christian poetry by adopting the exegetical mode of fulfilled typology, thus providing a unique ontological status for his poetry and a unique space where poetic prophecy has become the ultimate reality.[42] Yet, this can only be said of his poetic practice in the *Divine Comedy*. As Jean Pépin has pointed out, in his theoretical statements about allegory Dante actually hesitates between the poetic and the exegetic registers which he held to be incompatible, following Thomas Aquinas.[43] Even the most successful Christian poet struggled with this fundamental problem. The idea that literary beauty can be justified in and of itself and constitute a *bonum* never occurred to Augustine, as Marrou puts it.[44] This means that he could not have conceived of Christian poetry as leading to salvation, which is precisely the function Prudentius ascribes to his own work. This in turn goes a long way towards explaining Augustine's silence and the defensiveness of Christian poets to come.

[42] E. Auerbach, "Figura", in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*, Bern / München 1967, 84, 86, 87–89.

[43] See the extensive treatments by J. Pépin, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie*, Montréal 1970; and *La tradition de l'allégorie de Philon d'Alexandrie à Dante*, Paris 1987, 251–294.

[44] Marrou, *Saint Augustin* (above, note 9) 510.

QUID FACIT CUM HORATIO HIERONYMUS? CHRISTIAN LATIN POETRY AND SCRIPTURAL POETICS*

M. Vessey

In the summer of 394, the Latin-reading world's best known scriptural exegete sent a letter to one of its most accomplished poets. The recipient was Paulinus of Bordeaux, soon to be of Nola in Campania. The sender was Jerome, eight years a sojourner in the Holy Land, esteemed for his Christian learning by bishops as far afield as North Africa, Italy and Gaul. The letter-carrier was probably the same 'brother Ambrose' who had taken Paulinus' gifts and greeting from Spain to Bethlehem a few weeks earlier, whose name appears in the initial phrase of Jerome's reply, and whose reward was to be undying fame in medieval and later editions of the 'Vulgate', where the present letter (number 53 in the modern order of Jerome's correspondence) serves as a general prologue to the books of the Bible.[1] In a ninth-century manuscript the text is headed 'To Paulinus the presbyter *de studio scripturarum*', a title also found in one of the oldest additions to the final notice of Jerome's catalogue *De viris illustribus*.[2] Zeal for the Holy Scriptures, *divinarum scripturarum studium*, is one of the motives supplied by Jerome for the friendship tentatively begun by Paulinus, and the main ground from which he solicits his new correspondent.[3] Solicits or, we could say, interpellates—

* This essay has benefitted from discussions over many years with Professor Yves-Marie Duval, whose own analyses should always be preferred to my summaries of them.

[1] Jerome, *Ep.* 53 ('Frater Ambrosius'), ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54, Vienna 1910, 442–464. Chronology and context: D.E. Trout, 'The Dates of the Ordination of Paulinus of Bordeaux and of his Departure for Nola', in: *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 37 (1991) 237–260, with new arguments for 394 (rather than 395) as the date of this letter; id., *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, Poems*, Berkeley 1999, 90–103; S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Stuttgart 1992, 220–239; S. Mratschek, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola: Kommunikation und soziale Kontakte zwischen christlichen Intellektuellen*, Göttingen 2002, 90–103, 227–241.

[2] The reading is found in Hilberg's Codex P = Le Mans 126; A. Feder, *Studien zum Schriftstellerkatalog des heiligen Hieronymus*, Freiburg 1927, 112.

[3] Jerome, *Ep.* 53.1, CSEL 54:442: "Vera enim illa necessitudo est, Christi glutino

summons into being in a highly determined context. For no correspondent of Jerome's is ever entirely his own man or her own woman. Letter 53 and its sequel of the following year (number 58) are letters of direction in a strong, almost theatrical sense. Jerome the director is at once consultant and dramaturg. He advises Paulinus, Aquitanian grandee and seigneur of Nola, to come, then not to come, to Bethlehem, to be true to his monastic profession, to submit to the demands of the *scientia scripturarum*. At the same time he creates a character, 'Paulinus', for the human comedy that is his contribution to the genre practised before him by Plautus, Terence and the Roman satirical poets.

But what has *Horace* to do with the Bible? By the time he advertised his version of Tertullian's choice between Athens and Jerusalem,[4] Jerome had found a middle way of his own, via Alexandria. His literary Alexandrianism has two faces, one Greek and Christian, the other Latin and 'classical'. Its Greek Christian face is Origen's; that much was clear already to his contemporaries. From the great third-century theologian and exegete he derived the persona of the Christian writer as biblicist, philologist and ascetic that would set him apart from his Latin rivals.[5] The other face is Horace's. The author of the *Ars poetica* supplied Jerome with a portrait of the writer as artist in the Callimachean or neoteric mould, tireless fashioner and refashioner of texts, votary of the written word. From Horace he claimed an Alexandrianism which in other men's hands would manifest itself in charming miniatures—the *Mosella* of Ausonius, for example, or the *Epigrammata Bobbiensia*[6]—but which he, Jerome, was able to apply to an enterprise of literally biblical and metaphorically epic proportions, because he derived it from a Roman poet of the Augustan age.[7]

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copulata, quam non utilitas rei familiaris, non praesentia corporum tantum, non subdola et palpans adulatio, sed timor domini et divinarum scripturarum studia conciliant."

[4] Jerome, *Ep.* 22.29.7, CSEL 54:189: 'Quid facit cum psalterio Horatius? cum evangeliis Maro? cum apostolo Cicero?', echoing Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7.9; further parallels cited by N. Adkin, *Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the 'Libellus de Virginitate Servanda' (Letter 22)*, Cambridge 2003, ad loc. It is Jerome who first makes the contrast a predominantly 'literary' one.

[5] P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York 1988, 367–368; M. Vessey, 'Jerome's Origen: The Making of a Christian Literary *Persona*', in: E.A. Livingstone (ed), *Studia Patristica* 28, Leuven 1993, 135–145.

[6] On 'exaggerated neo-Alexandrianism' as a feature of Latin poetry of the period, see J.-L. Charlet, 'Aesthetic Trends in Late Latin Poetry (325–410)', *Philologus* 132 (1988) 74–85, at 77–78.

[7] For Horace's extension of '[t]he Callimachean principle of painstaking poetic

The chief products of Jerome's literary Alexandrianism, his scriptural translations and commentaries, are formally and essentially works of *prose*. To understand their initial impact on his readers, however, we must take account of his attitude towards Christian poetry-as-versification. What exactly was that? Modern scholarship is divided. A review of current opinions will provide the basis for a renewed approach to Jerome's scriptural-exegetical 'poetics'.

Jerome on Christian Latin Poetry: The Critical Debate

'For us', wrote E.R. Curtius in 1948, 'Jerome is of primary importance.'[8] He cites Letter 53 to Paulinus *De studio scripturarum*, Letter 57 to Pammachius *De optimo genere interpretandi*, and the catalogue *De viris illustribus*. Three points are emphasized: Jerome's approval of the Christian use of pagan literature; his recognition of the 'literary' quality of the Bible, conveyed by the idea of systematic correspondences between biblical and classical genres (*Entsprechungssystem*); and his achievement as a chronicler of Christian 'literature'. Particular significance is ascribed to his having taught, after Josephus and Eusebius, 'that certain books of the Bible were written partly or wholly in verse.'[9] This doctrine, says Curtius, 'provided a new basis for Christian poetry.' With that word and an illustrative quotation from Arator he moves on to Cassiodorus.

Although much has been written since Curtius on Jerome's relation to classical literature,[10] little more of interest had been said until quite

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workmanship' to larger poetic forms, see the classic analyses of C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, vol. 1, Cambridge 1971, 161, 175–176 and passim. According to Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics*, Princeton 1995, Callimachus' reputation as a master of the *Kleinwerk* derives, in any case, from a misreading of his oeuvre. On the immediate influence of Horace's advocacy of the *limae labor*, see B.R. Nagle, *The Poetics of Exile: Program and Polemic in the 'Tristia' and 'Epistulae ex Ponto' of Ovid*, Brussels 1980, 128–129. The Horatian affinities of Jerome's authorial 'self-fashioning' appear more clearly in the light of E. Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*, Cambridge 1998.

[8] E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* [1948], trans. W.R. Trask, Princeton 1953, 446.

[9] See also J.L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*, Baltimore 1981, 149–156.

[10] Orientation to the bibliography in H. Hagendahl and J.H. Waszink, art. 'Hieronymus', in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 15 (1991) 117–139, to be updated by the chapter on Jerome by Y.-M. Duval in vol. 6 of the *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike* (forthcoming).

recently about his relation to Christian poetry.[11] An important exception to that generalization is the work of Reinhart Herzog. In a few characteristically rigorous and illuminating pages at the end of his 1975 study of late antique biblical epic, Herzog summarized Jerome's views on the Bible, classical literature and Christian poetry.[12] Some of what he says there reappears, condensed to the point of obscurity, in his introduction to the late antique section of the new *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur*.[13]

According to Herzog, the first Latin writer to theorize Christian writerly activity was Lactantius. His advocacy of classical rhetoric as a medium for biblical teaching excluded the Bible from the 'literary' domain and, at the same time, opened the way for a new Christian 'literature' that would meet the aesthetic requirements of cultivated Roman readers. Lactantius announced the *classicism* of Latin Christian writing of the post-Constantinian age. His habit of citing and adapting passages from pagan authors, especially poets, marks an advanced stage in a process of Christian *aemulatio* or imitative reception of classical texts that had begun with the earliest Latin Apologists. This strategy was to be most strikingly realized in the fourth-century biblical epics of Juvencus and Proba, but was no less fundamental a principle of Christian production in other genres. At the same time, Lactantius announced the *biblicism* of Latin Christian writing of the post-Constantinian age—its primary reference to Scripture and primarily exegetical function. He did so, however, without ever *conceptualizing* the relations between the putatively 'non-literary' or inartistic text of the Bible and the 'literary' by-products of its interpretation, and none of his immediate successors in the West made good the deficiency. The issue was therefore still open in the 380s, when Jerome came to address it on the basis of

[11] Finding no connection between Jerome's views on contemporary Christian poetry and his opinion of the poetic quality of parts of the Bible, I omit the latter topic here except where it occurs in the work of other scholars. On the 'literary problem' of the Bible, see A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the 'Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim'*, Oxford 1993, 46–49; 'Philo and the Literary Quality of the Bible: A Theoretical Aspect of the Problem', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 46 (1995) 55–68.

[12] R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike: Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, vol. 1 (no more published), Munich 1975, 167–178. He returned to the subject in 'Exegese–Erbauung–Delectatio: Beiträge zu einer christlichen Poetik der Spätantike', in: W. Haug (ed), *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie*, Stuttgart 1979, 52–69.

[13] R. Herzog and P.L. Schmidt (eds), *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. 5: *Restauration und Erneuerung: Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n. Chr.*, Munich 1989, 20.

a biblical philology acquired from the Greek Fathers, especially Origen. Like Lactantius, Jerome was interested in the mediation of the Bible to cultivated Roman readers and conscious that the biblical text in its Old Latin versions was an affront to their aesthetic sensibilities. Rather than implicitly devalue the Bible as something 'non-literary' with respect to classical norms, however, Jerome revalued it as an '*anti*-literature' replete with forms to supersede those of the classical canon. We are reminded of Curtius' *Entsprechungssystem*. Herzog goes further: whereas Lactantius had recommended the use of classical rhetoric for the promulgation of biblical 'philosophy', Jerome (in the preface to the catalogue *De viris illustribus* and elsewhere) defined the whole of Christian literary production as writing on Holy Scripture, *de scripturis sanctis*. Christian writing thus became part of a 'literature' of the Bible, henceforth the only kind of writing (*litterae*) worthy of consideration. Classical literature lost its autonomy and was assimilated to the alien order of the biblical text. As an interpreter of that text, the *scriptor ecclesiasticus* was free to do as he pleased with the forms and devices of pagan poetry and prose, which could be subsumed without distinction in the exegetical oeuvre. Hence Jerome's biblicism tolerated the multigeneric experiments of late antique literary classicism, so far as they served the ends of biblical interpretation, even as it opposed any attempt to find intrinsic value in classical literature itself. Juvencus was quietly commended for virgilianizing the Gospel, Proba damned for christianizing Virgil. Thus, with many more nuances and not a few complications, the late Reinhart Herzog.

Both Curtius and Herzog had particular reasons to be concerned with Jerome's ideas about poetry. One was writing on the 'Latin' poetic tradition from Virgil to Dante and beyond, the other on a section of it comprising the biblical epics of the fourth to sixth centuries. Whether he knew it or not, Curtius' Jerome was a promoter of Christian poetry, enabler of works like Arator's versification of the Acts of the Apostles, a 'great representative of the Humanism of the Church'. By contrast, Herzog's Jerome is largely indifferent to Christian poetry but still responsible for ideas about the Bible and Christian writing which conferred value on poems that did the work of biblical exegesis. This difference of emphasis is reflected in the use respectively made by the two scholars of Jerome's Letters 53 and 58 to Paulinus. Curtius refers only to the former, finding there both a clear statement of the biblical-classical *Entsprechungssystem* and a nice instance of Jerome's facility with classical texts in his application of a line of Horace—*scribimus indocti*

doctique poemata passim—to the rabble of would-be biblical expositors.[14] For his part, Herzog cites both letters as evidence of Jerome's idea of a biblical anti-literature (*Kontrastliteratur*) and, as we might expect in a book on biblical epic, pays particular attention to his disparagement of Christian centonists.[15] He also offers a detailed analysis of a passage in Letter 58 in which Jerome exhorts Paulinus to a new kind of Bible-centred Christian writing.[16] Observing that there are no *poets* among the Christian authors there passed in review, even though Jerome undoubtedly knew Paulinus to be a poet, Herzog states: 'it is clear that, under the new principle [of Christian rhetorical exegesis of the Bible], poetry, like every other genre, has forfeited its status as a distinct field of literary reception.'[17] Paulinus was being invited to contribute to a Christian 'literature' which, while theoretically capable of all genres, was not structured by a genre-system of the classical type and therefore did not recognize poetry (i.e. versification) *as such*. So, for example, Jerome can describe the biblical David as 'our Simonides, Pindar and Alcaeus, our Flaccus too, Catullus and Serenus',[18] without holding any brief for the contemporary Christian poet as latter-day psalmist or versifier on sacred themes.

Herzog's analysis of Jerome's ideas on Christian writing in relation to the Bible seems to me basically correct.[19] I believe, however, that Letters 53 and 58 to Paulinus afford more telling evidence of Jerome's scripturally orientated 'poetics' than has hitherto been appreciated. As we have seen, Herzog and Curtius draw different conclusions from the same correspondence. Further diversity can be found in comments made in recent decades by other scholars interested in Jerome's attitude to poetry and his influence on the Christian poetic tradition—a sign perhaps that, in this area as in others, modern research has still to hit the grain of his densely allusive prose.

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[14] Jerome, *Ep.* 53.7.1 = Horace, *Epist.* 2.1.116. As we shall see, Jerome quotes more than this one line, but it is enough for Curtius to show how readily he summons a classical poet's references to the *ars poetica*.

[15] Jerome, *Ep.* 53.7; C.P.E. Springer, 'Jerome and the *Cento* of Proba', in: E.A. Livingstone (ed), *Studia Patristica* 28, Leuven 1993, 96–105.

[16] Jerome, *Ep.* 58.8–11, discussed below.

[17] Herzog, *Bibelepik*, 175.

[18] Jerome, *Ep.* 53.8.17. The description occurs in the course of a summary of the books of the Bible.

[19] I follow it closely in my chapter on 'Jerome and Rufinus' in: F. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth (eds), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge 2004, 318–327, at 320–321.

At the end of a paper on 'Jerome and Christian Poetry' first presented in 1986, Jean-Michel Poinsotte carefully qualifies Curtius' belief that the recognition of poetical books in the Bible sanctioned the activity of 'new' Christian poets in late antiquity.[20] True as this might be for Arator, it was not Jerome's position. Seeking to account for the latter's coolness towards the *poésie nouvelle chrétienne* of his age, Poinsotte suggests that it could have been a product of the guilt that he continued to feel for his inability to detach himself from the classical poets.[21] Yet he also states, without explaining the contradiction, that Jerome meant to make a Christian *poet* of Paulinus.[22]

Exactly contemporary with Poinsotte's paper is another by Haijo Westra on 'Augustine and Poetic Exegesis', where Jerome appears as the representative of a positive view of the possibilities for 'a combination of poetics and exegesis, of doctrine and esthetics' against the generally negative view of the author of the *Confessiones* and *De doctrina christiana*.[23] Following Herzog, Westra grounds his argument on Jerome's Letters 53 and 58 to Paulinus. He then argues, however, that Jerome 'envision[ed] this new [Christian] poetry as something totally original', unlike the Virgilian centos of Proba and others, and implies that the poetry of Prudentius, had he known it, might have fitted the bill. Westra's overall view of Jerome's place in the history of Christian poetry thus closely

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[20] J.-M. Poinsotte, 'Jérôme et la poésie latine chrétienne', in: Y.-M. Duval (ed), *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient: Actes du Colloque de Chantilly (septembre 1986)*, Paris 1988, 295–303.

[21] Ibid., 301–302. More to the point, in my view, is this observation: 'Quand on considère le "profil de carrière" de Jérôme, on s'aperçoit que l'expression poétique a été peu ou n'a pas été compatible avec les diverses activités, philologiques, exégétiques, spirituelles, polémiques auxquelles tant les circonstances que ses compétences l'ont amené à se vouer corps et âme' (301). On Jerome's literary 'career', see now M. Vessey, 'From *Cursus* to *Ductus*: Figures of Writing in Western Late Antiquity (Augustine, Jerome, Cassiodorus, Bede)', in: P. Cheney and F.A. de Armas (eds), *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Toronto 2002, 47–103, at 53–59.

[22] Poinsotte, 'Jérôme et la poésie latine chrétienne', 301: 'La double leçon [of Letters 53 and 58] est claire: que Paulin, qui faisait réference à Proba, ne verse donc pas dans l'ornière d'une 'poésie biblique' du type paraphrastique,—fût-elle moins caricaturale que celle des centonistes; qu'il soit surtout bien convaincu de la nécéssité qu'il y a, *pour le grand poète chrétien qu'il va devenir*, de se vouer à l'étude constante et approfondie des Écritures' (italics mine). Poinsotte accepts the arguments of Y.-M. Duval (below, n. 25), according to which Letter 53 contains veiled references to the *Evangeliorum libri IV* of Juvencus. As Duval and others have shown, Paulinus' Christian poetry before ca. 394 was strongly influenced by Juvencus.

[23] H. Westra, 'Augustine and Poetic Exegesis', in H.A. Meynell (ed.), *Grace, Politics and Desire: Essays on Augustine*, Calgary 1990, 87–100, at 95. A revised and updated version of this article is included in this volume.

resembles Curtius'. Like Poinsotte and others, he assumes that Letters 53 and 58 provide a charter for versification on scriptural themes.

Also partly dependent on Herzog for its sense of a difference between the attitudes of Jerome and Augustine is an article on 'The Place of Poetry in Latin Christianity' contributed by W. Evenepoel to a 1993 collection of essays on *Early Christian Poetry*. 'Jerome', writes Evenepoel, 'was eager to demonstrate that Christians were developing an extensive and decent literary activity.' Yet even he 'can hardly be called a propagandist of Christian poetry.'[24] Conceding as much, Evenepoel nonetheless repeats Curtius' suggestion that, by pointing out the (supposedly) metrical passages in the Book of Job and the poetic quality of the Psalms, Jerome 'supported one of the arguments wielded by the Christian poets to justify their poetic activities.' He does not say whether he also encouraged Paulinus in his vocation as a Christian poet.

All three of these scholars follow Curtius in using data from Jerome's letters to Paulinus to sketch a history of early Christian attitudes towards poetry, without lingering any longer than he did over the correspondence itself. This seems to me a slightly risky procedure. As noted earlier, each of Jerome's letters scripts a scene in a larger play of ideas and interests. Only when the scene is read in its 'dramatic' context does it yield a strictly Hieronymian sense. As it happens, Letters 53 and 58 to Paulinus have lately been subjected to close study by specialists in Jerome's life and writings. Their work, I suggest, points the way to a more circumstantial reading of his directions for Christian biblical 'poetics'. After a pioneering article by Pierre Courcelle nearly sixty years ago, the major contributions in this area are by Pierre Nautin, Yves-Marie Duval, and Stefan Rebenich.[25] Since Duval's analysis is the most directly concerned with Jerome's designs for Paulinus literary career, it will be the main axis for the present discussion.

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[24] Ed. J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst, *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 22, Leiden 1993, 35–60, at 55–56.

[25] P. Courcelle, 'Paulin de Nole et saint Jérôme', *Revue des Études Latines* 25 (1947) 250–280 (with a reversed chronology of Letters 53 and 58, subsequently discredited by Nautin); P. Nautin, 'Études de chronologie hiéronymienne (393–397) [III]', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 19 (1973) 213–239; Y.-M. Duval, 'Les premiers rapports de Paulin de Nole avec Jérôme: Moine et philosophe? Poète ou exégète?', in: *Polyanthema: Studi di letteratura cristiana antica offerti a Salvatore Costanza*, 2 vols., Messina 1989, 1:177–216; S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis* (above, n. 1). See also Trout, *Paulinus of Nola* (above, n. 1), esp. 98–100 on Jerome's 'literary criticism' of Paulinus' projects and the latter's response.

'Poet or exegete?' The subtitle of Duval's article on Jerome's Letters 53 and 58 to Paulinus frames a problem that is typically elided in more cursory treatments of the same texts. His aim, he says, is to 'draw attention to the place occupied by poetry in … letters that seem to be centred exclusively on Scripture.'[26] Jerome, he suggests, may already have seen some of Paulinus' verse by the time he wrote Letter 53; even if he had not, he was in a position to know of his poetic ambitions. His quotation of some lines of Horace about scribbling poets is more pointed if deliberately addressed to one who scribbles himself; the tirade against those who twist the Gospel into Virgilian shapes seems less arbitrary if the recipient is assumed to be familiar with the work of Proba, as he certainly was with that of Juvencus, to which it could be compared; the comments on the poetic qualities of certain biblical books, though also found elsewhere in Jerome's oeuvre, may have been specially calculated for their effect in the present case. Thus, if Paulinus read carefully 'between the lines' of Letter 53, as Duval suggests *we* still may, he would have received a number of strong hints for the proper direction of his own future literary activity.

With his next letter to Jerome, written in reply to Letter 53, Paulinus sent a copy of a prose panegyric that he had lately composed in honour of the emperor Theodosius. (Neither letter nor panegyric is extant.) In his Letter 58 Jerome takes advantage of this additional evidence of his correspondent's eloquence to urge him to the task of biblical exegesis. If Paulinus would only add a biblical expertise to his other accomplishments, the Latin world would acknowledge 'nothing more beautiful, more learned, or more Latinate than [his] books.'[27]

What are these hypothetical books (*volumina*)? Could they not, asks Duval, be works of Christian *poetry*?[28] The list of exemplary Latin

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[26] Duval, 'Premiers rapports', 194; the following points are taken from the argument down to 205.

[27] Jerome, *Ep.* 58.8–9, CSEL 54:537–539: "Librum tuum, quem pro Theodosio principe prudenter ornateque conpositum transmisisti, libenter legi. … Felix Theodosius, qui a tali Christi oratore defenditur. Illustrasti purpuras eius et utilitatem legum futuris saeculis consecrasti. Macte virtute: qui talia habes rudimenta, qualis exercitatus miles eris! O si mihi liceret istius modi ingenium non per Aonios montes et Heliconis vertices, ut poetae canunt, sed per Sion et Itabyrium et Sina et excelsa ducere scripturarum, si contingeret docere, quae didici, et quasi per manus mysteria tradere prophetarum, nasceretur nobis aliquid, quod docta Graecia non haberet. … *Si haberes hoc fundamentum, immo quasi extrema manus in tuo opere duceretur, nihil pulchrius, nihil doctius, nihilque Latinius tuis haberemus voluminibus*."

[28] Duval, 'Premiers rapports', 199–201: "Que sont ces *livres*? S'agit-il des livres que

Christian writers reeled off by Jerome in the next paragraph contains only prose authors, as Herzog had already remarked.[29] Yet at the same time he imagines Paulinus 'singing' like Joab from the rooftops of Sion what he had learnt, like a good disciple of Christ, in private, even though neither of the biblical texts thus conflated says anything about singing.[30] In support of the inference that Jerome was concerned with Paulinus' projects *as a poet*, Duval shows that the latter's practice of versifying on biblical themes before ca. 394 conformed in large measure to the methods of writers like Juvencus and Proba and was thus open to the charge of Virgilian pastiche leveled at certain unnamed parties in Letter 53.[31] He suggests that the absence of poems of that kind from Paulinus' oeuvre after the mid–390s may indicate that the charge had hit home.[32]

Poet or exegete? Duval would have Paulinus fill both roles after his own fashion, in his poems and prose-letters.[33] At the same time (in his 1989 article) he seems to allow for the possibility that Jerome once imagined a species of Christian *poetry* that would count as *biblical exegesis* in the strict sense in which he, Jerome, conceived that function. In a subsequent essay on Paulinus' lost panegyric of Theodosius, Duval narrows the temporal space of such a possibility, if he does not exclude it altogether.[34] In Letter 53, he reminds us, Jerome had tactfully but

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Paulin écrira? Peut-être. Mais comment leur mettre la dernière main avant qu'ils ne soient commencés? S'agit-il des seules *lettres* de Paulin que Jérôme a jugées si bien écrites? Ne peut-il pas s'agir *également* des ouvrages de poésie chrétienne … ainsi visés, une nouvelle fois, à demi-mot? … C'est en tout cas par deux citations poétiques que se termine le corps même de la lettre: Horace invite Paulin au travail—poétique?"

[29] Jerome, *Ep.* 58.10: Tertullian, Cyprian, Victorinus of Pettau, Lactantius, Arnobius and Hilary of Poitiers.

[30] Jerome, *Ep.* 58.11, CSEL 54:540: "Ad te ipsum veniam …. Magnum habes ingenium, infinitam sermonis supellectilem: et facile loqueris et pure, facilitasque ipsa et puritas mixta prudentiae est. Capite quippe sano omnes sensus vigent. Huic prudentiae et eloquentiae si accederet vel studium vel intellegentia scripturarum, *viderem te brevi arcem tenere nostrorum et ascendentem cum Ioab tecta Sion canere in domatibus, quod in cubiculis cognovisses* [cf. 1 Chron 11: 6 and Matt 10: 27]." Duval, 'Premiers rapports', 200: "il ne nous est dit nulle part que Joab … *chante* le moindre chant (de victoire), ni que le disciple doive *chanter* sur les toits ce qu'il a appris dans le secret. Il doit l'annoncer, le prêcher, le proclamer. Mais pourquoi le *chanter*? A moins qu'il ne soit poète?"

[31] Duval, 'Premiers rapports', 201–205.

[32] Ibid., 214. For arguments that Jerome's Letter 58 provided constructive hints for Paulinus' later poetry, see also G. Guttilla, 'Paolino di Nola e Girolamo', *Orpheus* 13 (1992) 278–294.

[33] Duval, 'Premiers rapports', 215–216.

[34] Y.-M. Duval, 'Le *Panégyrique de Théodose* par Paulin de Nole: Sa date, son sens,

pointedly dissuaded his correspondent from the practice of biblical verse paraphrase. 'By contrast, in [Letter 58],' he continues,

> having praised the formal quality of Paulinus' *prose*, he invites him to place it at the service of Scripture and to pass, under his tutelage, from verse paraphrase (not mentioned) to prose exposition. In a Greece-versus-Rome challenge that is at once Ciceronian and Augustan, Jerome twice promises Paulinus that he will 'bring something to birth which learned Greece does not possess,' and that the West will have nothing 'more beautiful, more learned (*doctius*), more latinate than those volumes'. He then begins his review of [Christian] Latin authors, all writers of *prose*—from Tertullian to Hilary—, showing that none of them has truly applied himself to *exegesis*. The place is open![35]

Duval's is the closest and best informed reading yet offered of these key passages of Jerome's correspondence. If we follow him all the way, we shall acknowledge that the only two texts in the whole of Jerome's oeuvre that could plausibly be construed as a general warrant for 'new' Christian poetry (i.e. verse), namely Letters 53 and 58 to Paulinus, scarcely bear that interpretation. Jerome, it turns out, was inviting Paulinus to become a literary biblicist like himself, a prose-writer *de scripturis sanctis*, producer of Latin *volumina* comparable with the *tomoi* or biblical commentaries of the Greek Origen.[36]

Herzog was right: there is no 'place' for poetry as such in the Christian literary system imagined by the monk of Bethlehem.[37] Why then have highly competent modern readers of his work, beginning with Curtius, so readily understood him otherwise—if not as an active

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son influence', in: G. Luongo (ed.), *Anchora Vitae: Atti del II Convegno Paoliniano nel XVI Centenario del Ritiro di Paolino a Nola (Nola-Cimitile, 18–20 maggio 1995)*, Naples 1998, 137–158.

[35] Ibid., 151–152, concluding that, in the event, "Paulin ne deviendra … pas un exégète de métier [i.e. in the manner of Jerome] ni ne s'adonnera plus à la poésie biblique." In a note on this passage Duval cites G. Guttilla, 'Il *Panegyricus Theodosii* di S. Paolino di Nola', *Koinonia* 14 (1990) 139–154, at 152 n. 42, who detects an echo in Jerome's text of Propertius 2.34.65–66: "Cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Graii! / Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade". According to Duval, such a reminiscence of Propertius would be a *unicum* in Jerome's work. But Jerome need not have read Propertius to have echoed these lines, which were already quoted in the ancient *Life of Virgil*.

[36] These are the Greek and Latin terms used regularly by Jerome of Origen's biblical commentaries, to distinguish them from two other exegetical genres represented in the Alexandrian's oeuvre, namely homilies and scholia (or *excerpta*).

[37] If Duval is right about the anti-Juvencan slant of Letter 53, Jerome's tolerance of classicizing Christian poetry would in fact be lower than Herzog calculated: not only is there no place for Christian poetry as a distinct genre, there is no function at all for Christian versification on biblical themes.

propagandist for Christian (biblical) poetry, then at least as favorable to it in principle? The lure of this particular misreading, I suggest, has everything to do with Jerome's notorious predilection for classical Latin writers, including poets. The literary biblicist, as he came to conceive and embody that figure, *took the place* of the poet in the (late) classical literary system. For the *ars poetica* of the Augustans and their epigoni, the man who made his literary career in the reign of Theodosius the Great substituted an *ars scripturalis* or, as he once half-jokingly called it, *ars scripturarum*. This substitution was not to be the labour of a day or of a single pair of letters. It was Jerome's life's work, the combined effect of all his literary exertions. The first letter to Paulinus, so intimately associated with the Latin Bible in later tradition, provides vital clues to his general strategy.

Jerome's Horace: Vulgar Latin Poetry and the Poet of the Vulgate

'I have touched briefly upon these things', says Jerome, summarizing the opening of Letter 53,

> so that you may understand that you cannot enter into the holy scriptures unless there is someone going ahead of you to show you the way. Passing in silence over grammarians, rhetoricians, philosophers, geometricians, dialecticians, musicians, astrologers, or physicians … I come to the lesser arts, those that are governed by the hand rather than the reason. Farmers, stone-masons, carpenters, wood- and metalworkers, weavers and fullers, and the rest who manufacture a variety of household objects and base wares—without a teacher, *they* cannot be what they aspire to be.
>
> 'Physicians do physicians' work, carpenters do carpentry.'
>
> Only the art of the scriptures (*scripturarum ars*) is claimed by all-comers.
>
> 'Skilled and unskilled alike, we all write poems.'

Primed by Horace, he then launches into an invective against the poetasters of his day, perverters of the true 'art' of the Scriptures.[38]

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[38] Jerome, *Ep.* 53.6–7, CSEL 54:452–453: "Haec a me perstricta sunt breviter … ut intellegeres te in scripturis sanctis sine praevio et monstrante semitam non posse ingredi. Taceo de grammaticis, rhetoribus, philosophis, geometricis, dialecticis, musicis, astrologis, medicis …. Ad minores veniam artes et quae non tam λόγω quam manu administrantur. Agricolae, caementarii, fabri, metallorum lignorumque caesores, lanarii quoque et fullones et ceteri, qui variam supellectilem et vilia opuscula fabri-

After the 'anti-Ciceronian' dream of Letter 22 this is one of the most celebrated passages in all Jerome's correspondence. Much scholarly energy has been spent on identifying likely targets of his satire on amateur biblicists (Proba? Rufinus? Ambrose? Augustine?). With all the fuss over personalities, little notice has been taken of the phrase *ars scripturarum*, so conspicuous between quoted lines of verse.[39] Unlike *scientia scripturarum* or *studium scripturarum*, it is not one of Jerome's habitual locutions. As Harald Hagendahl observes in his study of this author's borrowings from classical Latin literature, the list of liberal and mechanical arts is carefully contrived to set up the poetic quotation.[40] Moreover, by harping on the theme of art, Jerome ensures that his *ars scripturarum* will resonate with the alternative title of Horace's *Epistula ad Pisones*, already known in late antiquity as *De arte poetica*. The result is a pleasant conceit in a letter to an accomplished poet recently turned student of the Scriptures. But is that all it is?

Consider a passage from the *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, one of Jerome's earliest essays in sustained biblical exegesis, where he expands the proverbial *tempus tacendi et tempus loquendi*.[41] The whole paragraph is a doublet of the passage in Letter 53.6–7, with the closest resemblance at the end. 'No other arts', Jerome writes, 'do we learn without a teacher.

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cantur, absque doctore non possunt esse quod cupiunt. 'Quod medicorum est, promittunt medici, tractant fabrilia fabri.' Sola scripturarum ars est, quam sibi omnes passim vindicent: 'scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim' [cf. Horace, *Epist.* 2.1.115–117]. Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc soloecista verbosus, hanc universi praesumunt, lacerant, docent antequam discant. … Taceo de meis similibus, qui si forte ad scripturas sanctas post saeculares litteras venerint et sermone conposito aurem populi mulserint, quicquid dixerint hoc legem dei putant, nec scire dignantur quid prophetae, quid apostoli senserint, sed ad sensum suum incongrua aptant testimonia, quasi grande sit et non vitiosissimum dicendi genus depravare sententias et ad voluntatem suam scripturam trahere repugnantem. Quasi non legerimus Homerocentonas et Vergiliocentonas …".

[39] The exceptions are studies of Augustine, not Jerome: C. Schäublin, '*De Doctrina Christiana*: A Classic of Western Culture?', in D.W.H. Arnold and P. Bright (eds), *'De Doctrina Christiana': A Classic of Western Culture*, Notre Dame (Indiana) 1995, 47–67, at 55, followed by K. Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus, 'De doctrina christiana'*, Freiburg (Switzerland) 1996, 85.

[40] H. Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics: A Study on the Apologists, Jerome and Other Christian Writers*, Göteborg 1958, 187–188.

[41] Jerome, *Comm. in Ecclesiasten* 3.7, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 72, Turnhout 1959, 276: "Nihil nobis videatur rectum esse, nisi quod discimus, ut post multum silentium, de discipulis efficiamur magistri. Nunc vero pro saeculorum cotidie in peius labentium vitio, docemus in ecclesiis quod nescimus. Et si compositione verborum, vel instinctu

Only this one is so base and easy that it requires no instructor.' The art in question is again of the Scriptures. The commentator takes the Ecclesiast's references to wisdom and learning to specify the biblical expertise required of the Christian *vir ecclesiasticus*. As in Letter 53, the ideal practice of an *ars scripturarum* is contrasted with the idle verbosity of certain ignoramuses, only this time there is no poetic analogy and no Horatian tag—at least not in the immediate context. Glancing back a few verses, however, we find a curious exegesis of the Ecclesiast's 'man whose labour is in wisdom, learning and virtue.' 'Let each of us consider his own case', says the commentator, 'and he will see how much labour he spends in composing books, how "often he erases what he has written, in the attempt once more to write something worth reading"'.[42] The lines quoted are from one of Horace's three satires on literary subjects, where they follow a critique of the satirical writer Lucilius. Horace went on: *neque te ut miretur turba labores, / contentus paucis lectoribus* ('nor should you strive to be admired by the crowd, being content with a few readers'). The connection with Jerome's satire on crowd-pleasing Christian orators, to be resumed in Letter 53 with further assistance from the same poet, is plain enough.

There is more to the same purpose in the slightly earlier commentaries on selected Pauline Epistles, perhaps the first works Jerome sent back to Rome after settling in Bethlehem towards the end of the year 386. In the prologue to Book 3 of the *Commentary on Galatians* he mounts an assault on glib-tongued preachers, then pauses for breath:

> Why the foregoing? That you [Paula and Eustochium] and any others who chance to read this, may be assured that I am not writing a panegyric or *controversia*, but a commentary; that is to say, my aim is not to be praised for my own words, but to ensure that words well spoken by another are understood in the sense in which they were spoken. … The person in search of eloquence or who is delighted by declamations has Demosthenes and Polemon in Greek, Tully and Quintilian in Latin.[43]

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diaboli, qui fautor errorum est, plausus populi excitaverimus, contra conscientiam nostram scire nos arbitramur, de quo aliis potuimus persuadere. Omnes artes absque doctore non discimus, sola haec tam vilis et facilis est, ut non indigeat praeceptore." The work can be dated to the year 388.

[42] Ibid. 2.20/23, CCSL 72:271: "Se unusquisque consideret et videbit, quanto libros labore componat, quomodo 'saepe stilum vertat, iterum quae digna legi sint scripturus' [cf. Horace, *Serm.* 1.10.72–73], et homini qui non laboravit, det partem suam."

[43] Jerome, *Comm. in Ep. Pauli ad Galatas* 3, prol., PL 26:426D–428A: "Iam et in ecclesiis ista quaeruntur, omissaque apostolicorum simplicitate et puritate verborum,

And so on. Orators are not the only famous men of ancient Greece and Rome visited with Jerome's condescension; poets and philosophers share some of the disdain. For all that, there is no missing the main object of satire: those persons, especially bishops it would seem, who used the church as an arena for flaunting their rhetorical prowess.[44] It is a passage full of bravado. The Lady Rhetoric whom Jerome treats as a 'little hussy' (*quaedam meretricula*) was the mistress of late antique civic culture, patroness of bishops and consuls alike. It was one thing to cast her discreetly aside at the end of the autumn term, as Augustine had recently done in Milan,[45] quite another to expose her to public scorn. Augustine the bishop would one day make an honest woman of Rhetoric and an honorary Ciceronian of St Paul,[46] but not before Jerome, monk and exile in the Holy Land, had bent himself and his Latin readership to a different literary task, of the kind he calls the *opus commentariorum*, a work of biblical exegesis in prose. Throughout his commentaries on the Pauline epistles, as in that on Ecclesiastes, Jerome opposes the labour, learning and diligent writerly activity of the true biblicist to the indolence, ignorance and facile eloquence of the false

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quasi ad Athenaeum et ad auditoria convenitur, ut plausus circumstantium suscitentur, ut oratio rhetoricae artis fucata mendacio quasi quaedam meretricula procedat in publicum, non tam eruditura populos quam favorem populi quaesitura …. Quorsum ista? videlicet ut et vobis et caeteris (qui forte legere voluerint) sit responsum, me non panegyricum aut controversiam scribere, sed commentarium, id est, hoc habere propositum, non ut mea verba laudentur, sed ut quae ab alio bene dicta sunt, ita intelligantur ut dicta sunt. Officii mei est obscura disserere, manifesta perstringere, in dubiis immorari. Unde et a plerisque *commentariorum opus* explanatio nominatur. Si quis eloquentiam quaerit, vel declamationibus delectatur, habet in utraque lingua Demosthenem et Tullium, Polemonem et Quintilianum." Note the recurrence later in the same work of Horace, *Serm.* 1.10.72–73: "Interpretamur scripturas: saepe vertimus stilum …" (3.5.26, PL 26:453A). Again, the immediate context is a critique of vainglorious public preachers.

[44] There seems little doubt that Ambrose of Milan was among the butts of Jerome's abuse, as one who confessed to having 'taught before he had been instructed' in the Christian faith (*De officiis*, praef.) and who, in Jerome's jaundiced view, made the most of his declamatory skills as a bishop. For the history of this animosity, see M. Testard, 'Jérôme et Ambroise: Sur un "aveu" du *De officiis* de l'évêque de Milan', in *Jérôme entre l'Orient et l'Occident* (above, n. 20), 228–254, with reference to Letters 53 and 58 at 240–248; S.M. Oberhelman, 'Jerome's Earliest Attack on Ambrose: *On Ephesians*, Prologue (ML 26:469D–470A)', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 121 (1991) 377–401; N. Adkin, 'Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot', *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993) 364–376.

[45] Augustine, *Confessiones* 9.2, relating events of 386.

[46] In Book 4 of the *De doctrina christiana*, composed ca. 427. For the larger picture, see K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (eds), *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to 'Confessions'*, Oxford 2005.

teacher. There and elsewhere the terms of his polemic frequently recall, where they do not actually repeat, Horace's satires on Augustan hack-poets.

More than just a fleeting conceit or Hieronymian *hapax legomenon*, the phrase *ars scripturarum* in Letter 53 to Paulinus points, I suggest, to an important complex of ideas about Christian literary activity and its relation to the Bible.[47] The recourse to Horace, one of the classical writers ostensibly rejected in the frenzy of Letter 22, is anything but casual. Research by Lübeck and Hagendahl has shown him to be Jerome's favourite poet after Virgil, quoted or imitated in over 65 places.[48] More than three quarters of the allusions are to the *Satires* and *Epistles*, including the *De arte poetica*, of which a significant number fall into the special, high-order category of imitative reception that Curtius called *die literarische Topik* and that we may call 'topics of authorship' or 'literary performance'. Some of Jerome's Virgilianisms belong to the same category, but whereas Virgil typically has to be allegorized in such cases, Horace, because he is already writing about literary work, can be taken literally.[49] 'What [Jerome] borrowed from Horace', says Hagendahl, 'was above all general sentences and reflections of a nature to complete a line of thought and to bring it out into relief.'[50] This is true enough, as far as it goes. But we can, I think, be a little more precise. The most important thing that Jerome borrowed from Horace, or expressed with his help, was a sense of the honour properly due to those who take pains over *writing*. In this respect, as we shall see, his rhetorical Horatianism is of a piece with his rhetorical anti-Ciceronianism.

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[47] See further M. Vessey, 'Conference and Confession: Literary Pragmatics in Augustine's "Apologia contra Hieronymum"', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993) 175–213.

[48] Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics* (above, n. 40), 281–283, building on A. Luebeck, *Hieronymus quos noverit scriptores et ex quibus hauserit*, Leipzig 1872, 160–167. D.S. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist: A Study in Christian Latin Thought and Letters*, Ithaca 1964, considers many of the same texts. For Jerome's use of Horace, see now A.V. Nazzaro, 'La presenza di Orazio in Girolamo', in: M. Gigante and S. Cerasuolo, *Lettura orazione*, Naples 1995, 305–323; R. Henke, '*Quid facit cum psalterio Horatius?* Zur Horaz-Nutzung in der frühchristlichen Literatur', in: W. Blümer, R. Henke and M. Mülke (eds), *Alvarium: Festschrift für Christian Gnilka*, Münster 2002, 173–186, at 174–177.

[49] Cf. Herzog, *Bibelepik*, 200, on Jerome's allegorization of Virgil in this sense. Nazzaro, 'Presenza', 306, notes 'il costante riferimento al Venosino [i.e. Horace] per questioni di critica letteraria.'

[50] Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics*, 283.

The main fury of Jerome's anti-Ciceronian invective from the late 380s is reserved for the rabble of eloquent men like himself who (unlike himself!) took the sacred text as material for oratorical performances on set themes, quoting it out of context and twisting its sense for the sake of popular applause.[51] By the time he wrote to Paulinus in 394, his repertoire of insults for practitioners of this *vitiosissimum dicendi genus* was well rehearsed. An anthology of similar passages from his letters, prefaces and other writings of the years 386–395 would number several dozen items. Interestingly, the anti-rhetorical virus seems not to have manifested itself in this form until after Jerome's forced departure from the city of Rome in 385. From that coincidence we may perhaps infer an additional context for his frequent resort thereafter to the most urbane of Latin poets.

Henri-Irénée Marrou once described Augustine as *un parvenu de la culture*.[52] As Stefan Rebenich has since demonstrated with admirable clarity, the label fits Jerome as well.[53] When the latter abandoned his quest of a civil career, probably ca. 370, he exchanged the traditional *moyens de parvenir* for others held out by an ascendant church.[54] For the next decade or so, his relations with bishops and other clergy, monks, and prominent members of the laity were such as to augur a future role for him of some public visibility. Even if we can no longer predict without deficit of hindsight what that role would have been, we may at least conjure a vision of Jerome, ca. 395, the staunchly Nicene, impressively ascetic bishop of a Northern Italian town or (why not?) of Rome, cutting a figure like the one that he himself had recently drawn for Nepotianus of Altinum in Letter 52. If we allow that an episcopal *cathedra* had become a respectable goal for Christian literati of Jerome's gener-

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[51] Cf. Oberhelman, 'Jerome's Earliest Attack', 398–401; W. Dunphy, 'On the Date of St. Ambrose's *De Tobia*', *Sacris Erudiri* 27 (1984) 27–36, at 29–33.

[52] In the 'Retractatio' (1949) to his *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Paris 1938 (and later reprints), 652. J. Fontaine, 'Comment doit-on appliquer la notion de genre littéraire à la littérature latine chrétienne du IVe siècle?', *Philologus* 132 (1988) 53–73, at 67, likewise notes Jerome's 'passion de "parvenir"', citing comments made by J.F. Matthews at the Chantilly Jerome colloquium of 1986 (above, n. 20). Cf. R.G. Mayer, 'Horace's *Moyen de Parvenir*', in: S.J. Harrison (ed), *Homage to Horace: A Bimillenary Celebration*, Oxford 1995, 279–295.

[53] Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis* (above, n. 1) and *Jerome*, London 2002.

[54] His timing accords with a larger movement of opinion, increasingly favourable to public professions of Christianity, on the part of western Roman élites: see now M.R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2002.

ation, and assume that his own prospects of a bishopric, such as they may have been, vanished for ever with his Roman disgrace of 385,[55] it becomes easier to account for the pervasive anti-rhetoricism of his writings of the next decade. His attitude would then be more than just the reflex of a man in love with the simplicity of the evangelical *sermo piscatorius*. It would also, if not primarily, be the conscious device of one who knew beyond a doubt that the main venue of Christian oratorical display in the Theodosian Age, the officially sanctioned auditorium of the episcopal *ecclesia*, was now and forever closed to him as a performer.

We need not suppose that Jerome waited to be expelled from Rome in 385 to start exploring the possibilities of a *writerly* activity centered on the Bible. Already by the late 370s he had come into contact with the biblical scholarship of Origen.[56] The Alexandrian provided him not only with the material and methods of much of his own work but also, as I have argued elsewhere, with the persona of a Christian writer. However, I was too quick to assert that 'in the competitive market for Christian instruction of the 380s and early 390s, the man who could present himself in the mask of Origen had a head-start on his rivals.'[57] One did not simply offer oneself to the Latin-reading public as a writer on the Bible and wait to be lionized. One had first, or simultaneously, to make an opening for such a novel activity within the common discursive space of (late) Latin letters.[58] It is in this

[55] The circumstances of Jerome's removal from Rome are obscure. For a reconstruction that does not unduly solicit the texts, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies*, London 1975, 112–115. Following a suggestion of Nautin's, Oberhelman, 'Jerome's Earliest Attack', 389–392, conjectures that Ambrose may have failed to intervene on Jerome's behalf and that the latter's animus towards the bishop of Milan should be dated from that moment. There is no certainty on the point: Rebenich, *Jerome*, 39 and n. 50.

[56] P.B. Harvey, Jr., 'Saints and Satyrs: Jerome the Scholar at Work', *Athenaeum* 86 (1998) 35–56, at 51, with references to earlier scholarship.

[57] Vessey, 'Jerome's Origen' (above, n. 5), 144. R. Hennings, 'Hieronymus zum Bischofsamt', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 108 (1997) 1–11 argues that Jerome's Origenian scholarly-monastic vocation ruled out from the start any episcopal aspirations. The issue does not seem to me so clear-cut.

[58] G.B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, trans. J.B. Solodow, Baltimore 1994, 4–5: 'It is precisely the continual shifting of the institutional boundaries of the Latin literary system that seems to be one of its most powerful dynamic factors, a fruitful opening outwards that continually assures new vitality.' Another way to frame the present argument would be in terms of 'positions' and 'position-takings' within a developing field of production, as theorized for a more recent period by P. Bourdieu, e.g. in *The Field of Cultural Production*, New York 1993, and *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. S. Emanuel, Stanford 1995.

regard, I suggest, that Horace in his turn proved so useful to Jerome, as the latter began his 'career' as an expatriate Latin writer in 386. Horace's 'Alexandrian' view of poetic creation as a tirelessly critical process offered the basis on which an Origenian practice of Christian writing *de scripturis sanctis* could be assimilated to one of the highest professions in the Latin literary system, that of the poet. Whatever prestige still attached to the *munus et officium poetae* (Horace, *Ars poetica* 306) Jerome seized in the late 380s for a new literary activity, as it were a neo-neotericism, a new kind of writing conceived as minutely careful, endlessly laborious rewriting and textual-exegetical correction.[59] The output of the Christian litteratus as he defined it would henceforth be 'scriptural' in a highly exclusive double sense. It would be work inextricably tied to the medium of writing, like all great poetry known to Jerome, unlike the oratorical effusions of his victims in satire. And it would be work in prose on Holy Scripture, *de scripturis sanctis*, distinct from all previous poetry-as-versification, 'pagan' or Christian.[60]

We may now come back to the correspondence with Paulinus and to a reading of these texts that acknowledges the strategic interests of their

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[59] His frequent use of the Horatian *stilum saepe vertas* is only the most obvious sign of a constant preoccupation with the *limae labor et mora* (Horace, *Ars poetica* 291) conceived as the writer's manual labour. See e.g. *Comm. in Ep. Pauli ad Galatas* 3, prol., PL 26:427B–D: "Loquar? Sed omnem sermonis elegantiam et Latini eloquii venustatem, stridor lectionis Hebraicae sordidavit. … Accedit ad hoc quia propter oculorum et totius corpusculi infirmitatem *manu mea ipse non scribo*, nec labore et diligentia compensare queo eloquii tarditatem, quod de Vergilio quoque tradunt, quia libros suos in modum ursorum fetum lambendo figuraverit. … Oratio autem etsi de bonae indolis ingenio sit profecta et distincta inventionibus et ornata flore verborum, tamen *nisi auctoris sui manu limata fuerit et polita*, non est nitida, non habet mixtam cum decore gravitatem. … Quorsum ista?" (followed by the passage quoted above, n. 43). Under the guise of rejecting Alexandrian artistry, Jerome adopts its characteristic ideology as a means of distinguishing his own performance from that of the despised declaimers. Elsewhere the application is more straightforward, as in the prefaces to his translations of the Old Testament where accuracy of transcription (*diligens scriptura*) becomes a theological virtue. In relation to Jerome's advice to Paulinus, we also observe (1) the close conjunction in *Ep.* 53.6–7 of the manual arts (*minores artes*), poetry, and the science of Scripture, and (2) the insistence at *Ep.* 58.9.2 on Paulinus' putting the 'finishing touches' (*extrema manus*) to his work. Whether explicating, translating, emending or simply repunctuating, Jerome's Christian writer *nouveau style* is an artisan of the biblical text. His nearest and most faithful successor in this respect is surely Cassiodorus; see M. Vessey 'From *Cursus* to *Ductus*' (above, n. 21) 84–85, 92, and my introduction to *Cassiodorus: 'Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning' and 'On the Soul'*, trans. J.W. Halporn, Liverpool 2004, passim.

[60] For a fresh appreciation, by a twenty-first century poet and bookman, of Jerome's sensitivity to the graphic dimension of the (Latin) Bible and its meanings, see R. Bringhurst, *Prosodies of Meaning: Literary Form in Native North America*, Winnipeg 2004, 27–29.

author. I began this essay by underlining the fact that the addressees of Jerome's correspondence are as much his creatures or dramatic characters as they are figures from any history we could otherwise reconstruct. Paulinus is a case in point. The entry of this rich and highly literate Gallo-Roman aristocrat into the circle of Jerome's acquaintance in the mid–390s offered the latter two kinds of opportunity. He could try to win the newcomer as a patron. And he could stage him in his correspondence as a Christian writer after his own art. The two goals are pursued simultaneously in Letters 53 and 58. When Jerome calls upon Paulinus to outdo the Greeks, he is not looking for another Virgil or Juvencus or indeed for any kind of 'poet' in the conventional sense of that word. The volumes that he wants to see—or rather, since he himself is already producing them, the volumes that he wants his readers to see and admire—are books of scriptural exegesis in prose, equivalents of the *tomoi* of Origen, but distinguished in a way that Origen's could never have been by the 'manual' artistry of a Latin Alexandrian with Augustan longings. The personal literary projects of his correspondent, Paulinus, whatever Jerome may in fact have thought of them, are ultimately of little consequence.

A few years earlier, Jerome had omitted from his list of Christian *viri illustres* one of the handful of Latin poets of the 370s and '80s who had made names for themselves outside their home towns, the consummate neoteric Ausonius. Now, on the pretext of advising one of Ausonius' most gifted protégés, he steals the poet's laurels for an alternative art of his own devising. He ends Letter 58 by reminding Paulinus that 'nothing in this life comes without hard work' (*nil sine magno vita labore dedit mortalibus*).[61] The proverb is lifted from a satire of Horace, where it spills from the mouth of a parasitical poetaster intent on winning favour with Maecenas. If the joke was on Paulinus, it was bigger than he could have guessed. For he had, without knowing it, lent his hand to one of the most laborious acts in European literary history: the displacement of Roman poetry by biblical-exegetical prose.[62]

[61] Jerome, *Ep.* 58.11.2. Cf. Horace, *Serm.* 1.9.59–60.

[62] Displacement, not replacement. Christian writers after Jerome continued to compose Latin poetry, much of it on biblical themes. Beginning with Sedulius, they also cultivated a new prosimetric form of exegesis, the so-called *opus geminatum*. For the long history, see J.V. Fleming, 'Muses of the Monastery', *Speculum* 78 (2003) 1071–1106, with discussion of Jerome's Letter 53—'rightly regarded as one of the foundational texts of patristic literary criticism'—at 1076–1077.

TIME AND THE INTEGRITY OF POETRY: AMBROSE AND AUGUSTINE

M.B. Pranger

In two highly instructive and densely argued articles the Latin scholar Jan den Boeft has offered some fresh insights into the poetry of Ambrose. In his 'Ambrosius Lyricus'[1] he pays attention to the specific nature of Ambrose's lyricism which, rather than being explained 'in terms that express spontaneity and subjectivity and allot a leading role to the emotions' fits in with the tendency of classical pagan poetry such as Horace's 'to control the expression of feelings by thoughtful ordering' (p. 83). In a second article '*Aeterne Rerum Conditor*: Ambrose's Poem about "Time"'[2] Den Boeft contrasts the Augustinian notion of time as presented in book 11 of the *Confessions* with Ambrose's more linear and more liturgical view of the matter. Whilst Augustine seems to emphasise the difference between time and eternity and, as a consequence, time's fragile status as severely lacking in 'eternal' characteristics such as stability and immutability, Ambrose feels more at ease at—and less threatened by—the divisions and subdivisions of time as they manifest themselves in the change of seasons, the change of night and day, and, more specifically, the change of the hours / *horae*:

> Nevertheless, it [Augustine's concept of time] is primarily a philosophical way to deal with time. There are other ways in which time can be experienced. For this we may turn to Augustine's teacher in Milan, bishop Ambrose. In his explanation of *In principio fecit deus caelum et terram* (Gen 1:1) he introduces Exod 12:2 *Mensis hic initium mensuum erit vobis*. This concerns the feast of Passover, *quod veris initio celebratur*, a very apt time for the creation…This sets the tone for the future; the chronological sequence of time brings with it that each year the earth produces new seeds and buds, and thus repeats what God had said in Gen 1:11… Regeneration mirrors regeneration and therefore the Israelites left Egypt

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[1] Jan den Boeft, 'Ambrosius Lyricus', in J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (eds), *Early Christian Poetry; a Collection of Essays*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, vol. XXII, Leiden: Brill 1993, 77–91.

[2] Jan den Boeft, 'Aeterne Rerum Conditor: Ambrose's Poem about "Time"', in: Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (eds), *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome; Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst*. Leiden 2003, 27–40.

> in spring and Easter is celebrated in spring. This is an entirely different view of time, and also one which lends itself to be operationalized in poetical form. The penetrating analyses of book 11 of the *Confessions* might perhaps also be turned into poetry. For instance in the shape of philosophical hymns, but, if so, these would primarily appeal to the intellect, less to the senses. But there is more. Ambrose's handling of time in his discussion of the crucial subject of the creation forms a perfect match with the early Christian tradition, in which time was arranged in the yearly recurring feasts and each day in a number of specific moments. These moments had been indicated explicitly or implicitly by God himself (pp. 27–28).

In his fine analysis of the poem Den Boeft traces the dynamics of time over and against symbolic, too symbolic readings that turn it into a learned treatise. The emphasis is on action, divine action that is, in the shape of creation and redemption causing penance (as, for instance, the cock's crow, Peter's tears) and the return of hope on the human part, not as symbolic rendering of time but, rather the other way around, punctuating 'the time God has set for such experiences' (p. 36).

If, in this article, I want to take issue with Den Boeft with regard to the notion of time, it is on the basis of my admiration for his analysis and in order to sharpen my own thoughts about the matter with the help of his subtle readings.

Let us have a closer look, then, at the opening stanza of Ambrose's *Aeterne rerum conditor:*

> *Aeterne rerum conditor,*
> *noctem diemque qui regis,*
> *qui temporum das tempora*
> *ut alleves fastidium.*[3]

In my view Den Boeft is right in drawing our attention to the clever, rhetorical use of the *tempora-temporum* in the guise of the figure of polyptoton:

> No doubt this [*temporum…tempora*] refers to God's arrangement of the subdivisions of time (hours, months, seasons etc.). Judging from Prudentius, *Cathemerinon* 5.2: *Qui certis vicibus tempora dividis*, we can conclude that Prudentius understood it in this way. Remarkably, however, if not downright amazingly, Ambrose's masterly use of polyptoton seems wasted on the learned readers. I am unable to think of a better way to express time's plurality over against eternity's singularity. One comes

[3] Ambroise de Milan, *Hymnes*, Jacques Fontaine (ed.), Paris 1992, 149.

> across other fine and functional specimens of polyptoton in ancient poetry and rhetoric, but here the iconic handling this figure of speech by Ambrose is truly outstanding (p. 29).

Of course, it is not difficult to agree with Den Boeft's admiration for Ambrose's skilful use of polyptoton. However, in my view precisely in this figure of speech another dimension of temporality manifests itself. It is not only the division and subdivision of time that comes to the fore, but also its repetitive nature. So, there is more to polyptoton than linear temporality. It, rather, expresses time both in its uniqueness and its recurring nature. As such, the rhythm of day and night, darkness and light is meaningless in itself. Underlying it is a more important 'spiritual' feature inextricably intertwined with the physical treadmill in which the cosmos moves. Wrapped inside the physics of cosmic order is a human sensitivity that at once shapes and breaks the sequence of temporality. It shapes and gets moving the created world (*rerum conditor*) and it breaks the threat of endless repetition culminating in melancholy and boredom…: *fastidium*. But it is only *sub specie aeternitatis* that the division and subdivision of time makes sense, and Den Boeft is right in emphasising its prominent place at the beginning of the poem. Yet, not only does it mark the contrast with the world of time and change. Semantically, it also somehow represents the performative process of creation out of eternity, *pli selon pli*, as in Boulez's musical rendering of Mallarmé's poem evoking daybreak spreading over the town of Bruges. Moving between the parameters of eternity and boredom (*fastidium*), the reader (spectator) discerns how night and day are slowly and almost invisibly being separated without our spectator being able to pinpoint the exact moment of their parting. The same principle applies to the next stanza in which the cock's crow announces the day after watching over the deep darkness of the night just to 'separate night from night':

> *Praeco diei iam sonat*
> *noctis profundae pervigil,*
> *nocturna lux viantibus*
> *a nocte noctem segregans.*[4]

Of course, all this would have been much less problematic, if Ambrose had used the figure of polyptoton to express one-dimensionally a variety of meanings within a poetical unit whose ontological status would in the end have to be characterised as intrinsically and organically one.

[4] *Hymnes*, 149.

The example of such a seemingly easier option that comes immediately to mind is the Trinity which has indeed been adorned by Ambrose with quite some examples of polyptoton as in the first and—by way of sheer repetition—last stanza of *In aurora*:

Splendor paternae gloriae,
de luce lucem proferens,
lux lucis et fons luminis,
diem dies illuminans,

Aurora cursus provehat;
aurora totus prodeat
in Patre totus Filius,
et totus in Verbo Pater.[5]

At first glance the figure of polyptoton expresses here the ontological closeness and, even, the identity, between the Father and the Son. Now all would be well, if this divine light were to stay within its own eternal abode. However, the ambiguity of the poem lies precisely in the fact that, on the one hand, we have a traditional presentation of the second person of the Trinity (quite harmlessly as the 'light from light' from the Creed) and, on the other, a more problematic rendering of a fused moving around of Christ both within the Trinity and out of it toward creation and mankind: the 'day that illuminates the day' and the wish that, as another Apollo, Christ in the guise of dawn may follow his course without for one moment losing sight of the Father ('The Son remaining altogether in the Father, the Father remaining altogether in the Word').

In the light of what I have been saying so far it does not come as a surprise that, in my view, the sequential concept of time as applied to Ambrose's poetry has to be somewhat modified. In the very same vein in which Den Boeft himself reads Ambrose's poem, that is, avoiding as much as possible the superimposition of learning and allegory on the text, it can be argued that the notion of time should be reduced to its most simple and obvious manifestation, and that is the present, the (poetical) *hodie* of liturgical time. Thus, as Den Boeft points out, the *diluit* of the *hoc ipse petra ecclesiae / canente culpa diluit* (the washing away of the sin of Peter's betrayal at daybreak) can be both present and perfect tense, drawing a past event into the liturgical present:

[5] *Hymnes*, 184, 187.

> In the actual liturgical performance Peter's repentance is revived, just as in the hymn *Iam surgit hora tertia* the verb in the second verse *qua Christus ascendit crucem* refers to a past act, but one which the singers experience at that precise moment of their singing. More important, however, is the firm embedding of the scene of Peter's repentance in the arrangement of time. Important as it is for all Christian believers—after all it concerns the rock of the Church—, in itself it is only one of the scenes picturing daybreak. To put it into other words: it is not Peter washing away his guilt which prompts reflections on the symbolism of daybreak, but the other way around: the scene of repentance appears in its natural place in time, in accordance with the chronological order which God wanted. Peter's reaction is indeed "timely" (p. 33).

Here I could not agree more. Yet in my view it is precisely the use of 'timely' that asks for a denser concept of time than any 'chronological order' would allow for. The dramatic reversal suggested by Den Boeft in which the moment of time is fully charged with events that follow from it rather than the other way around can only be effective from a theatrical viewpoint in which 'the chronological order' is made part of a (liturgical) performance here and now. In principle such a performance could, of course, be staged in prose as well. But it is poetry—and, in its suit, the lyrical prose of sermons etc.—that is furnished with the performative elements required to establish theatrical time and make the song be sung (cf. the singing of the church built into the dramatic scene of Peter's betrayal and repentance: *petra…**canente** culpam diluit*). Paradoxically, this dramatic intensity and condensation resulting from the establishment of a past present cannot avoid the all pervasive presence of eternity. On this issue I think Den Boeft's quite antagonistic view of time versus eternity has to be slightly refined. For, as I see it, any attempt on Ambrose's part to link the course of sacred history (for instance, regeneration in the shape of spring) to history and time as such (for instance, generation), before being characterised as a 'chronological sequence of time', should be assessed in the light of eternity as establishing the integral present of *this* particular hour in which night is separated from night and *tempora* from *tempora*. Consequently, it is not so much 'time's plurality' that is being expressed 'over and against eternity's singularity.' As a matter of fact, it is not in the nature of eternity to be singular. It rather embraces the plurality of time which in its turn has to wrangle its own moment of glory, that is, of the presence of the present—and hence its past and future—from that very embrace. Poetically speaking, that disentanglement is achieved by separating *tempora* from *tempora*. Particularly if seen from the viewpoint of the subse-

quent monastic use of Ambrose's poetry, the illusory and fragile nature of this disentanglement should not be underrated. Within the circular frame of monastic time, all narrative progress such as the *iam* of the second stanza (*praeco diei iam sonat*), so beautifully commented upon by Den Boeft in terms of suspense as 'contrary to expectation' (against the odds of darkness and night), takes its meaning from some kind of eternity hovering over the vicissitudes of time. To account for this curious embrace poetry of a kind is needed, or, at any rate, a theatrical staging of a course of events, of a chronological order which at the same time turns out to be no order at all but the inexplicable, indivisible and condensed presence of *hodie*.

So far I have been trying to argue that for Ambrose there is more to the appearance of time than its representing a chronological order. This being so, I propose to wage an experiment and explore whether, in one way or another, this Ambrosian 'more' may benefit from a comparison with the Augustinian concept of time. Without wanting to pass over any differences between the two men on the issue of temporality, I would like to point out, first, that Augustinian time, aporetic though it may be, is not as merely negative as Den Boeft suggests and, second, that, just as for Ambrose, so also for Augustine, the status of time is somehow related to the status of poetry.

Before turning to Augustine's more radical exposition of time and its poetical implications in the *Confessions*, let us first turn to a seemingly more mitigated presentation of historical time in the *City of God*. It is there that one might expect a prosaic view of time, as it is Augustine's stated purpose in that work to trace the chronology of history. Now the surface level of that book might be misleading insofar as we indeed find the facts and figures of history being discussed at length. However, at the same time a deep sense of scepticism is underlying those discussions of history *wie es gewesen* since its true sense and meaning, its *causae occultae*, remain hidden to the created eye culminating in the tantalising moment in which the invisible *civitates* of God and the devil meet and historical time, *saeculum*, is being established. But the presence of God's city itself is not for the taking. As a result, in order to be established and grasped, however momentarily, it has to be sung, so to speak, to be performed and brought to the fore by the mind for as long as the latter is capable of laying hold on it. As such it is the stuff of poetry. For what are we to think of the following passage?

> Now the knowledge of the creature is a kind of twilight, compared with the knowledge of the Creator; and then comes the daylight and the morning, when that knowledge is linked with the praise and love of the Creator; and it never declined into night, so long as the Creator is not deprived of his creature's love. And in fact Scripture never imposes the word 'night', in the enumeration of those days one after another. Scripture never says, 'Night came'; but, 'Evening came and morning came; one day'. Similarly on the second day and all the rest. The creature's knowledge, left to itself, is, we might say, in faded colours, compared with the knowledge that comes when it is known in the Wisdom of God, in that art, as it were, by which it was created. For that reason it can more appropriately be described as evening than as night. And yet that evening turns again to morning, as I have said, when it is turned to the praise and love of the Creator.[6]

It is hard not to notice both the Ambrosian and poetical-liturgical overtones in this passage albeit it somehow in reverse order. Whilst Ambrose evokes nocturnal scenes to be exorcised by the break of daylight, Augustine, discussing the order of creation at the beginning of time, leaves out the night altogether just to jump from twilight to daylight and morning. As far as creation is concerned, it can never be seen to decline into night as long as the bond of love between Creator and creation is being maintained. Of course, this is not to say that Augustine was blind to the nocturnal side of life. On the contrary, if anyone has spent his energy in measuring and describing the night life of human sin, it surely is Augustine. Consequently, eliminating *nox* as specifically being created should not, of course, be taken as an attempt to overlook the problems of evil and sin. Nor are we supposed to put up with life as one prolonged and uninterrupted twilight zone. It is this skipping of the night that prevents the city of God from materialising like a Platonic idea coming true or, for that matter, of being present throughout as the inner structure of being. Thus, durability has become a matter of voice exorcising the invading, alien night. For evening turns to morning only as long as—and on the condition that—the song of God's praise and love be sung. That is where Augustine's prose and Ambrose's poetry meet and, if Ambrose is to be called the master of polyptoton (*temporum …tempora*), Augustine can be seen to excel in the use of *reticentia* (*aposiopesis* or *praecisio*), the refusal to mention the night side by name in order

[6] Augustinus, *De civitate dei*, XI, 7, D. Dombart and A. Kalb (eds), *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, vols. XLVII and XLVIII. I use the translation by Henry Bettenson, *Concerning The City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth 1972, 437.

to enhance the effect of its being exorcised, in fact, the effect of salvific history *tout court*. Whether writing prose or poetry, both authors face the same problem of temporality: how to divide time without falling into the abyss of disintegration. Paradoxically, this very question comes down to another one: how to keep eternity at bay, how not to fall into the abyss of divine presence? So much can be said about those questions here and now: one-dimensionally distinguishing between day and night will not do. Rather, *dies* has to be segregated from *dies*, and *nox* from *nox*.

If we now turn to Augustine's *Confessions*, and more in particular to his concept of time as presented in book 11, it surely does not look as if we are confronted there with a piece of poetry but, rather, with prose regardless of its lyrical undercurrents. Yet in my view things are more complicated than that. Just as the question has never been fully solved exactly under which prose genre the *Confessions* is to be characterised (one or many, autobiography, hexaemeral exegesis, philosophical treatise), so the continuity or discontinuity of the subject-matter is open to different assessments. Yet, despite the problems of (rhetorical) form, the overall tonality of the work is surprisingly simple: it is one protracted prayer to God shaped after the format of the Psalms which at no time loses sight of its addressee. As such it is, however prosaic qua form, poetry of a kind. As we shall see, in its reading of Ambrose it can even be called meta-poetry, yet poetry still. This poetic mode of *Confessions* is not meant to be a sheer embellishment of devout prose, but is at the core of its turning into a performative rather than a descriptive piece of work. Just as with Ambrose the separation from day and day, night and night, is a matter of voice, so for Augustine it is voice—culminating in his own response to the child's voice of the *tolle lege*—that makes his confession work.

Obvious though all this may be, in view of the persisting urge on the part of interpreters to separate form from content, it may bear some repetition. And even in so fine and subtle an analysis as Den Boeft's, some remnants of disciplinary distinctness still survive. For notwithstanding the emphasis on the existential and little 'abstract' nature of Augustine's analysis of time, the latter is still primarily to be seen as a philosophical exercise. And if an opportunity were to present itself to turn it into poetry, it would take on the guise of 'philosophical hymns, appealing to the intellect, less to the senses' (p. 28). All this does not, of course, mean that Augustine's search for the meaning of time unin-

terruptedly addressed to his Creator does not have a philosophical ring to it. However, those questions do not primarily derive from a merely philosophical perplexity but, paradoxically, from a semantic proximity that overrules the divisions of temporality and the alienation of the *regio dissimilitudinis*. In the following I propose to explain exactly what I mean by 'semantic proximity.' First and foremost it means that, for Augustine, time and eternity are not as opposed, or, at any rate, not as opposed in a simply binary way as many interpreters would have it (a view of the human existence, by the way, that has become the charter of Augustinian pessimism). Here I allow myself once more slightly to disagree with Den Boeft regarding his emphasis on the fact that 'time differs radically from eternity…being 'temporal can be a painful experience' (p. 27), referring to the highly dramatic wording by Augustine of the *condition humaine*: '*Domine, pater meus aeternus es; at ego in tempora dissilui, quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae* / You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul.' Strong language indeed, but it may make sense to read on: '*donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui* / until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge into you.'[7] Now time and eternity are not so much closer one to another, manifesting themselves, in a more or less Plotinian fashion, as two sides of the same coin. If that were exclusively to be the case, we would have 'temporal successiveness' as 'an experience of disintegration' on the one hand and the ascent toward divine eternity' as 'a recovery of unity' on the other.[8] This may be a reassuring statement from a philosophical or an anthropological point of view. To be semantically satisfactory, however, greater precision is needed with regard to the status of both successiveness and unity, and, it should be added, with regard to the nature of their simultaneous appearance. In other words, time and eternity are in the grip of each other, and it is up to the discerning eye of the mind to disentangle them. To find oneself, then, 'scattered in times / *at ego in tempora dissilui*' does not make

[7] Augustinus, *Confessiones* 11.39, Pius Knöll (ed.), *CSEL* 33. I use the translation by Henry Chadwick, *Saint Augustine, Confessions*, Oxford 1991, 244.

[8] Cf. Chadwick's footnote on p. 244: 'Augustine's image of the historical process is that of a flowing river or rivers, with many stormy cataracts. Underlying this passage is the language of Plotinus (6.6.1.5) about the fall away from the One as a scattering and extending. Temporal successiveness is an experience of disintegration; the ascent to divine eternity is a recovery of time.'

much sense if such a condition would boil down tautologically to an exclusively temporal affair, that is, 'to find oneself scattered in times.' The fact that one finds oneself scattered in times expresses itself the human ignorance with regard to the order of time up to the point of being torn to pieces by 'the storm of incoherent events' (*tumultuosis varietatibus*). That being so, this scattered state neither means that there is no order at all nor that its presence is hidden behind the screen of incoherent events in a sequential fashion, since there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that 'orderly' should be identical to 'sequential.' At this point one starts feeling eternity's pressure, 'point' being indeed the right expression here as it represents the moment at which past and future meet in the present, the future being shortened by the expecting mind and the past being lengthened by the remembering mind, both establishing future and past as part of the 'here and now'. The 'here and now' that governs the past and the future is itself, in its turn, utterly elusive and yet almost violently present:

> *Et quis negat praesens tempus carere spatio, quia in puncto praeterit? Sed tamen perdurat attentio, per quam pergat abesse quod aderit. Non igitur longum tempus futurum, quod non est, sed longum futurum longa expectatio futuri est, neque longum praeteritum tempus, quod non est, sed longum praeteritum longa memoria praeteriti est*
>
> And who would deny that the present time lacks extension because it passes in a point? But yet the attention lasts through which what will be present moves towards absence. That is why future time, which does not exist, is not long. A long future rather is a long expectation of the future; nor is past time, which does not exist, long. Rather a long past is a long remembrance of the past.[9]

Elsewhere I have dealt with the narratological effects of the *attentio perdurat*: the permanent focus which is at the centre of the *punctum*, meaning, as pointed out by E.P. Meijering, both point and moment, and representing 'the indivisibility and the near-nothingness of the present.'[10] This is quite unlike Aristotle's view according to which 'the "now" is supposed to divide and to unite, just as the point divides and unites the line in order, thus, among other things, to guarantee the continuity in time.'[11] If this permanent focus on the *praesens praesentis* of time

[9] *Confessiones* 11. 37 (my translation).

[10] M.B. Pranger, 'Time and Narrative in Augustine's Confessiones', *The Journal of Religion* 81/3 (2001) 377–394.

[11] E.P. Meijering, *Augustin über Schöpfung, Ewigkeit und Zeit. Das elfte Buch der Bekenntnisse*, Leiden 1979, 99.

—resulting in time at once being and not being—may reverse the order of narrative discourse and, breaking through the linearity of narrative, draws each and every statement made about time in general and, with regard to the subject-matter of *Confessions*, the past in particular, to a centre while at the same time sending it away into the exile of multiplicity and dissimilitude, this holds even more true for poetry. But however pitiful that state of plurality may be, neither from a philosophical nor from an existential viewpoint can it be called the most urgent problem to be solved. It is rather the integrity of life, and hence, the integrity of life's story, of poetry that, like time itself, stands out for its presence at once elusive and overwhelming, and has to be assessed accordingly. Little wonder then that on two occasions Augustine uses poetry—Ambrose's hymn *Deus creator omnium* and a psalm (*canticum*) respectively—to illustrate the basic aporias of temporality and recollection.[12] Doing so, Augustine faces two perplexing problems: what happens to the poem's integrity once it is broken down into pieces, and how to measure those pieces, the progression of the poem being recited in its metrical modules, both long and short? Of course, the answer to those questions is well known: it is through the *distentio animi* that we measure time in the mind but even that inward turn begs the question, since measuring ultimately means that, amidst 'the hubbub of impressions,' we measure 'the present consciousness' (*affectionem…ipsam metior praesentem*) from which extensions, like optional illusions, derive and to which they return. In terms of the poem, that means that for the time being the problem of its integrity—that is, its being remembered integrally by the mind—remains unsolved.

> Suppose I am about to recite a psalm which I know. Before I begin, my expectation is directed towards the whole (*in totum expectatio mea tenditur*). But when I have begun the verses from it which I take into the past become the object of my memory. The life of this act of mine is stretched two ways, into my memory because of the words I have already said and into my expectation because of those which I am about to say. But my attention is on what is present: by that the future is transferred to become the past (*praesens tamen est attentio mea, per quam traicitur quod erat futurum, ut fiat praeteritum*). As the action advances further and further, the shorter the expectation and the longer the memory, until all expectation is consumed, the entire action is finished, and it has passed into the memory. What occurs in the psalm as a whole occurs in its particular pieces and its individual syllables. The same is true of a longer action in

[12] *Confessiones* 11.35 and 11.38.

> which perhaps the psalm is a part. It is also valid of the entire life of an individual person, where all actions are parts of a whole, and of the total history of the 'sons of men' where all human lives are but parts.[13]

The comparison drawn here between life and reciting poetry is more than just a metaphorical nicety. It stems from the aporetic depths imposed on the mind by the enigma of the present (the *praesens praesentis*) which somehow extends and shrinks, while maintaining its integrity. In spite of all interiorisation into the vast fields of memory, the real battle over the *praesens praesentis* keeps being fought on the surface level of language and life. That is why the fact that time is being measured by the mind makes only sense, not as an escape into the inarticulate realm of interiority but as a solution to Augustine's first aporetic example of poetry: Ambrose's hymn, all of it. The problem raised there as to the measuring of metrically long syllables with the help of short ones (the long syllables being twice the short), consists of the impossibility to 'keep my hold (*quomodo tenebo*) on the short' since 'the long does not begin to sound unless the short has ceased to sound. I can hardly measure the long during the presence of its sound, as measuring becomes possible only after it has ended…Both [the long and short syllables] have sounded; they have flown away; they belong to the past. They do not exist.'[14]

This seems the appropriate moment to (re)introduce my notion of semantic proximity. First and foremost it means that any extension of consciousness—*distentio animi*—manifesting itself in language and thought, however stretched out toward the future or the past, somehow fails to escape from the present: *praesens futuri*, *praesens praeteriti*. That present is, in its turn, the indivisible moment, the split second of sound, or, in more 'conscious' terms, of voice. That being so, the Augustinian paradox of time looks as follows: the split second in which the 'syllable' sounds, whether long or short, cannot be measured on a horizontal level but only vertically, through the establishing of a present that contains the unfathomable depths of memory. Measuring parts—syllables—of the poem which seem to follow one another sequentially means measuring the future and the past on the condition that by doing so one measures the present, that is, measures it non-sequentially, since

[13] *Confessiones* 11.38; Chadwick, 243.
[14] *Confessiones* 11.35; Chadwick, 241–242.

at the centre of it all is the present consciousness, the permanent focus of *attentio perdurat*.

But what kind of voice is capable of producing the sound of such a *praesens praesentis* that, while being itself unfathomable, echoes at the same time the voices of both future and past? It is here that we start to discern the contours of another semantic proximity in the guise of the fact that *Confessions* as a 'poem' is structured according to the principle of Augustinian temporality. Let us for one moment imagine Augustine's *confessio* as the protracted psalm in whose shape it has been purposely designed, in other words, as 'the entire life of an individual person.' Then we should notice that the notion of confessional prayer is a performative one, supported by the elements of singsong and voice (from the community singing of Ambrose's hymns to the *singing* of the *tolle lege*).[15] The semantic proximity of all this consists in the fact that the permanent focus of all discourse about God, who represents both the integrity of time and its unassailability, articulates each and every moment of Augustine's life so as to reveal it at once close and remote in view of the divine, as, indeed, in view of one's own identity. In order to distinguish day from night within that context, or even one hour or, for that matter, one moment from another, one has to pass through the integrity of time in the shape of the God whose presence is invoked uninterruptedly. The integral presence of this poem in the mind is no less remarkable than the integral remembering of Ambrose's *Deus creator omnium*. From a poetic as well as from a poetical point of view, the effect of the permanent focus on, *and* measuring in and of time is achieved through a sustained injection of scattered images and quotations from the Bible, mainly from the Psalms, or biblical quotes turned into Psalm-like incantations, into the flow of confessional discourse. As a result, if that flow may still look like the account of a sequential order of events, it changes colours on the spot turning into a poem in which moments of time are punctuated, called to the surface of the 'here and now'. As such it is being measured by the remembering mind in an uninterrupted process of extension and compression.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise that it is far from me to impose on Ambrose a fully Augustinian concept of time. Yet the semantic proximity as evoked by the figure of polyptoton (*temporum / temporum*, *a nocte*

[15] *Confessiones* 8.29 and 9.14.

noctem) somehow echoes the Augustinian aporias of time. Admittedly, it looks highly improbable that Ambrose would ever have used Augustine's strong language expressing the bond of ignorance and temporality: 'You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul.' That does not mean, however, that for Ambrose the sequential order of time, including the separation of night and day, is as unproblematic and straightforward a fact of (created) life as the first stanza of the *Aeterne rerum conditor* evoking the creation of day and night would seem to suggest to the eye of the innocent beholder. As Den Boeft rightly points out, the hymn is not about symbolism but, the other way around, about the time 'God has determined for such experiences,' that is, the moments of salvific history and their simultaneous wholesome effects here and now. As for Augustine, his is an even sharper razor cutting off symbolism and other metaphorical evasions, not to mention the sequential stories of prosaic experience. As a consequence, the most adequate way for him to express the indivisible here and now underlying his being scattered in times whose order he does not understand is by means of a scattered poem, broken images, sounds voicing moments as brief as Peter's sung repentance (*petra canente*). Each and every such moment represents focus, duration, unfathomable presence, and the integral song of an *unendliche Melodie*.

II

INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS AND WORKS

THE *EVANGELIORUM LIBRI* OF JUVENCUS: EXEGESIS BY STEALTH?

R.P.H. Green

Origins are often obscure, but Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Juvencus, a priest from Elvira in Spain,[1] was to all appearances the pioneer of extended biblical paraphrase in Latin verse. He might also be claimed as the initiator of the long-lived combination of Poetry and Exegesis, though in fact there have been a variety of judgements not only about the extent and depth of his exegesis, but whether it is present at all. This paper will review some of the most important interpretations and perspectives of recent years, and then introduce an important new factor; but before that, some preliminary orientation is required. A man of aristocratic lineage—Jerome, writing in his *De Viris Illustribus*[2] some sixty years after Juvencus, confirms what the parade of his names in the manuscripts suggest—he was well equipped by both birth and education for his ambitious attempt to present a version of the Gospels in hexameter verse, the metre of classical epic and the time-honoured poetic vehicle of *Romanitas*. All writers refer to the work as an epic, even if they vie to underrate epic's importance.[3] It is a bold and groundbreaking act of cultural appropriation that sought to claim the power and attraction of epic for the lowly discourse of the Christian gospels. His purpose in general terms—other than the one on very prominent display in his preface, or proem, that of winning for himself eternal fame, and (hopefully) eternal salvation—was doubtless to make the gospels known to a wider public. The potential readership will have expanded with the surge of interest in Christianity following the rise

[1] For the evidence of this, see J. Fontaine, *Isidore de Seville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne Wisigothique*, Paris 1959, 8.

[2] Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 84: Iuvencus, nobilissimi generis Hispanus, presbyter, quattuor evangelia hexametris versibus paene ad verbum transferens quattuor libros composuit, et nonnulla eodem metro ad sacramentorum ordinem pertinentia. Floruit sub Constantino principe. There is a briefer notice by Jerome in *Chron. ad 329 p.Chr.* 'Iuvencus presbyter natione Hispanus evangelia heroicis versibus explicat'.

[3] Notably R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike. Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, Band 1, Munich 1975; M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*, Liverpool 1985.

of Constantine, whom he praises in his so-called Epilogue.[4] He wrote to awake interest rather than achieve conversion, perhaps, and for the benefit of those who might have been deterred by the language of the Latin gospels; it is unlikely that his aim was to provide an educational resource, at a time when the need was apparently not felt. But these and many other points must be reserved for fuller treatment elsewhere; the concern of this paper is with the question of exegesis in the *Evangeliorum Libri*.

In the following summary of Juvencus' basic principles not everything is clear-cut and beyond dispute, but a brisk outline of what is a consistent and distinctive pattern will no doubt be helpful. The four books present a single account of the life of Christ, almost certainly of Juvencus' own making,[5] and made by welding together parts of various gospels rather than blending their varying accounts into a consensus. Juvencus switches between Gospels, on the basis, it seems, of a carefully prepared schema.[6] The basis is Matthew's gospel, and few episodes from it are passed over; Mark is represented by one passage but otherwise by no more than the occasional detail, while the first two early chapters of Luke and part of a third are used. Three sections introduce material from various chapters of John. Broadly speaking, narrative and teaching are equally distributed; Juvencus includes numerous discourses by Jesus, whether long or short, including the Sermon on the Mount, which takes up about half of his first book.

He followed one of the biblical translations known today as the *Vetus Latina*, or Old Latin translation, one of many versions the Vulgate of some fifty years later was eventually to replace. Which particular version, or indeed which variant of it, Juvencus used cannot be stated with any certainty: there is no clear correlation with either of the main versions (now called 'European' and 'African') presented in the edition of Jülicher[7] or the variants of them that he records. After a number of rather desultory attempts over the years, we now have the benefit of a very painstaking and systematic attempt to solve the question;[8] but

[4] 4. 802–812.

[5] R. Herzog, 'Iuvencus', in: *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, Band 5: *Restauration und Erneuerung 284–374 n.Chr.*, Munich 1989, 332 and 335.

[6] L. Braun and A. Engel, 'Quellenwechsel' im Bibelepos des Iuvencus', *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 2, 1998, 123–138 study this matter in detail.

[7] See P. Burton, *The Old Latin Gospels*, Oxford 2000, 14–15.

[8] C. Heinsdorff, *Christus, Nikodemus und die Samaritanerin bei Juvencus*, Berlin and New York 2003, 339–480.

given the nature of Juvencus' paraphrastic procedures[9] it may not be worthwhile to delve further.[10] Some changes must inevitably be made in creating a paraphrase in hexameters, whether by using synonyms, rephrasing expressions, or varying grammatical constructions, and it is possible that in places these will create a false impression of correspondence with this or that biblical version. The well-known difficulties of any modern translator—Jerome used the language of translation in his notice of Juvencus quoted above—and the experiences of composers of Latin verse (a species not yet extinct) are relevant here, and could be used to show that a considerable degree of adjustment is found to be unavoidable.

It is unlikely that Juvencus followed the original Greek of the New Testament. To be sure, critics over the years have drawn attention to passages where his version resembles the Greek in some way, but the cogency of these examples varies considerably. In any case, the more persuasive ones are not nearly numerous enough to prove that he had regular recourse to a Greek version. The best explanation of them, given their paucity, is that he knew details of Greek versions, or interpretations based on them, only through a commentary or by word of mouth. Of these explanations perhaps the latter is more probable, for even in the case of a learned man one must not underestimate the importance of the oral element of Christianity. Even if he knew no Greek himself (but he certainly handles the occasional loanword soundly enough) it is not unlikely that versions or interpretations of the Greek had somehow become known to him. There is a danger—and this point is relevant to exegesis too—that our view of his sources may be over-simplified by being confined to the written word.

Jerome's description of his paraphrase as 'almost word for word' is generally accepted. Of course there may be an element of exaggeration, hardly surprising to anyone who knows Jerome, but no-one in his time is more qualified to judge the closeness of a paraphrase or translation, even though no hard and fast system, and apparently no consistent terminology, can be detected in his opinions.[11] If, as is quite

[9] Well summarised in general by Roberts (n. 3).

[10] K. Thraede, art. "Iuvencus", in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 19, Stuttgart 2001, 887.

[11] H. Marti, *Übersetzer der Augustin-Zeit: Interpretationen von Selbstzeugnissen* (Studia et testimonia antiqua XIV), Munich 1974, 73–76.

possible, he read Paulinus of Nola's[12] poem on John the Baptist[13] shortly before he compiled his *De Viris Illustribus*, the difference in treatment between the two poetic renderings of Luke's first chapter will have been obvious. We surely do not need to go any further, or even that far, for an explanation.[14] It is easy to see what he meant, and the essential integrity of Jerome's description can be maintained while allowing that Juvencus makes various kinds of change. Indeed evidence of the classical ideal of *variatio* is not lacking in Juvencus. He sometimes keeps the exact words of his original, as far as we can tell, but more often makes small changes, changes which in some cases are required by the metre, but which also serve, in a distinctive if outwardly simple way, to add colour and strengthen the impact; the function of his battery of added epithets, for example, is at once epicising and edifying. The conspicuous parataxis of the Gospels' narrative style is reduced, by various expedients, but by no means eliminated. He also tends to cut down the number of exchanges in a long conversation, and may rearrange the components of a narrative. In general, the paraphrase gives the impression of a strong guiding hand, but also a readiness to mould and adjust on a small scale without deserting the original.

It will be helpful, and relevant to the discussions which follow, to quote a typical passage, chosen at random, to give a brief illustration of the texture of his verse, followed by some very short comments. (The often cited description of a storm on the sea of Galilee, vividly expanded with the help of Vergil, is actually quite untypical of him).[15] Here are lines 3. 521–533,[16] followed by one of the European versions of the Latin translation of Matthew 19: 23–26:

Tum sic discipulis vitae spes unica fatur:
"*Difficile est terris adfixos divite gaza*
Avelli caelique leves in regna venire.

[12] A.-M. Turcan-Verkerk, *Un poète latin chrétien redécouvert: Latinius Pacatus Drepanius, panégyriste de Théodose*, 155–165 (Collection Latomus 276, Brussels 2003), suggests that Drepanius Pacatus may be the author, but on tenuous grounds.

[13] D.E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola; Life, Letters and Poems*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1999, 98–100.

[14] The treatment in Roberts (n. 3), 75–76, seems overelaborate, and open to question at various points. See R.P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (Oxford, 2006), 44–46.

[15] There is a good treatment in C. Ratkowitsch, 'Vergils Seesturm bei Iuvencus und Sedulius', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 29 (1986), 40–58.

[16] In the text of J. Huemer, *Gai Vetti Aquilini Iuvenci Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*, CSEL XXIV, Prague, Vienna, Leipzig 1891.

nam citius tenuis per acus transire foramen
deformis poterunt immania membra cameli
quam queat ut dives caelestia regna videre."
Talibus attoniti comites stupidique silebant,
volventes quae tanta foret sub pectore virtus
humano, talem possit quae prendere vitam.
Respicit aeternae iustorum gloria vitae
atque ait: "Haec homini forsan videantur acerba,
sed deus electis facilem praepandit in aethra
possibilemque viam, virtus quam celsa capessat".

Iesus autem dixit discipulis suis: "Amen dico vobis, quod dives difficile intrabit in regna caelorum. Iterum dico vobis: facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire quam divitem intrare in regnum caelorum". Auditis autem his discipuli mirabantur et timebant valde dicentes: "Quis ergo poterit salvus esse?" Aspiciens autem Iesus dixit illis: "Apud homines hoc impossibile est, apud Deum autem omnia possibilia sunt".

The structure, and to some extent the wording, of the original are clearly apparent in Juvencus' version. At the level of individual words the most obvious things are the retention of *difficile* (but *facilius* is ruled out by metre, and replaced by *citius*); the metrically difficult word *impossibile* does not appear, but is reflected in the rare *possibilem*. The biblical phrases for 'kingdom of heaven' are changed only slightly, but the associated verb *intrare* is adapted to *venire* and then *videre*. But there is a considerable degree of variation in other respects. The description of the camel is elaborated with adjectives, as is that of the needle; the rich man becomes, in the plural, men 'fixed to the earth' and in need of drastic separation from their treasures, a weight which prevents them from moving to heaven. In the lines introducing Christ's speeches Juvencus takes the opportunity to attach descriptive titles to the name of Christ: he is "the only hope of life", and "the glory of the eternal life of the just". It is interesting to note how the response of the disciples is enacted in the paraphrase: they are dumbfounded, rather than surprised, and silent—this is a new point—and their reactions are presented more fully than in the original, but not in a separate speech. Christ can read their thoughts, and in his ensuing words is made to take up, and develop, their points. His way may be difficult, but is not impossible; and the *virtus* required is not beyond human capabilities, for God reveals an easy path, which *virtus* may attain.

It is important for the thesis of this essay that these preliminary remarks about Juvencus' procedures do not end without a few words about his omissions. Within his series of selected episodes and pericopes Juvencus leaves little out: where he does, this may be for various

reasons, such as a difficult name in the original, though he is metrically agile and does not often run away from such a challenge, or because he finds the content of a verse or an episode amenable to abbreviation without loss of essential detail. From what I have called his original schema, his single composite account of Christ's life and words, few sections are absent (e.g. Matthew 11: 16–24 and 12: 16–21). Closer scrutiny quickly reveals more frequent omissions of the occasional verse or half-verse, but what is left out in this way is a very small proportion of the whole. Once more it is possible to see quite clearly the principles on which he worked. He aims at economy, and seldom repeats a verse which occurs elsewhere in his base text (so 'the first shall be last and the last first', or the comment that a prophet has no honour in his own country).[17] He seeks to generate pace and to accentuate the drama of an episode (typically omitting the short comments of onlookers, in order to keep the focus on the main actors). He also omits various short phrases, such as 'wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together', or 'the hairs of your head are numbered', which he may have thought otiose or obscure.[18] Some verses which are almost impossible to versify because of difficult names or because of a group of names, are also omitted.[19] In short, Juvencus is a *fidus interpres*.

In any study of Juvencus an important place must be given to the remarkable work of Reinhart Herzog, still invaluable, and intriguing, thirty years after its publication.[20] Juvencus is central to this rich and stimulating study of what Herzog construed as the first stage of biblical epic, covering Juvencus, Proba and the somewhat later poet of the Old Testament generally known as Cyprian. It would take a long time to consider all the theses put forward in that very original book, and one is left to guess at how he might have constructed the later stages of the development of *Bibelepik*, which he was sadly unable to pursue. To say nothing of the breadth of knowledge of classical and patristic literature displayed there, this book impresses with its variety of methodologies—especially reception theory, aesthetic theory, and form-criticism—and with its sophisticated application of concepts such as those of autonomy

[17] The first is found at Matthew 19:30 and 20:16, the second at Matthew 13:57 and John 4: 44.

[18] Matthew 24:28 and 10:30.

[19] Such clusters should be taken into account when evaluating the statistics of J.-M. Poinsotte, *Juvencus et Israel*, Paris 1979, 40–50.

[20] Herzog (n. 3).

and heteronomy,[21] the 'destruction' of epic, and above all the category of 'edification' ('Erbauung') signalled in his title. For Herzog the genre was above all an edificatory one, and epic has a strictly subordinate role.

So too, it seems, does exegesis of the biblical text.[22] It is certainly not the main driver in what Herzog sees as the drastic transformation (96) of the biblical original by Juvencus. In Juvencus exegesis is 'extremely scanty' (115), and Herzog emphasises later (121) that Juvencus does not explain, but rather re-forms or even deforms ('verformt') the Bible. Herzog's point here, and its validity in his terms, is not substantially weakened if one takes issue with his assertion (116) that the tradition of exegesis was little developed in the West before Hilary. Even if one sets aside Tertullian and Cyprian, who are not principally commentators or exegetes, there were Western commentators, such as Victorinus of Pettau,[23] who (albeit in this case on the book of Revelation, the only one of many commentaries ascribed to him that is extant) testify to a relatively developed form of exegesis; and it is clear that the influence of Greek exegesis, especially Origen's, was widespread among Latin writers. Herzog's Juvencus is not an exegete, then, and neither is he a paraphraser or a writer of epic; his search for total 're-presentation' of the Bible sets him apart him from all these modes. He substitutes himself for the biblical speaker to some extent (115)—indeed to a very considerable extent. To separate out the roles of narrator and exegete would be to misunderstand Herzog's central and emphatic thesis that Juvencus writes with the claim to be the Bible itself. The elision of any difference between narrator and exegete is for him a crucial part of Juvencus' method and intention.

But Herzog's study of 'Tendenz' provides a good example of what (these are not his terms) might be called macro-exegesis, as opposed to micro-exegesis of the kind detected by other scholars, to be discussed below. (We could also speak, in this context of exegetical practice, of a substantial space of middle ground, which would equate roughly in scope and density to the typical (pre-Augustinian) patristic commen-

[21] On this point see J. Fontaine's review in *Latomus* 34 (1979), 724–727 at 725.

[22] M. Roberts, 'Vergil and the Gospels: the *Evangeliorum Libri* of Juvencus' in R. Rees (ed.) *Romane Memento. Vergil in the Fourth Century*, 49–50 draws attention to Herzog's brief remarks on the appropriation of Vergil as exegesis, another area which this paper must exclude.

[23] Victorinus of Pettau, CSEL 49. Jerome (*De Viris Illustribus* 74) says that he was martyred, and he must have died in the early fourth century.

tary; this is reflected in some ways by the later poets Sedulius and Arator).[24] Central to Herzog's view of Juvencus' thorough-going remodelling or even 'Deformation' of the Bible is the process of 'Christianisierung',[25] with its ancillary processes of 'Romanisierung' and 'Entjudaisierung', by which he reconfigures his material so as to reflect the perspective of the fourth-century Church. Herzog gives due regard to the difficulties of presenting the material in metrical terms (under the laws of metre, as Jerome put it in Ep. 70),[26] or the problems raised by unfamiliar customs, but the adaptations are far more widespread. In his main example of 'Entjudaisierung' (1. 117–129) we have an example (which is typical) of Juvencus' stress on the world-wide destination of the Christian message and the universal power and concern of God, who is not 'the Lord God of Israel' but 'parent of stars and sky and sea'. This point is not invalidated by the fact that Juvencus has conspicuously retained an emphatic Hebraism in the phrase 'horn of salvation' that is provided through David (1. 120/1).

Another example of 'Christianisierung' concerns the Eucharist. Herzog sees this not only in Juvencus' version of the fourth request of the Lord's Prayer (this will be discussed below) but also in the miracle of turning water into wine. Eschewing the term exegesis and related words, and also the concept of allusion, which he seldom if ever uses, Herzog speaks of 'hermeneutische Signale', drawing attention to other places in this passage and in later ones where the reader may see in references to wine and water a sacramental sense. These passages (4. 454–456 and 2. 731–732, relating to Mt 26: 29 and 12: 50 respectively) do not obviously support his contention—they are both in fact rather obscure—and it is surely illegitimate to adduce the procedures of the paraphrast and poet Cyprian almost a century later to bolster the point. His interpretative move here is expounded at slightly greater length but perhaps no more clearly elsewhere,[27] in a paper where he described the Eucharistic context as *manifested* (my emphasis; but, as Herzog states, it

[24] Especially the latter, for whom see J. Schwind, *Arator-Studien* (Hypomnemata 94), Göttingen 1990 and Green (n. 14) *passim*.

[25] The term is also used by Heinsdorff (n. 8), 32–39, "Die Christianisierung der Johannestaufe".

[26] Jerome, Ep. 70. 5 *Iuvencus presbyter sub Constantino historiam domini salvatoris versibus explicavit nec pertimuit evangelii maiestatem sub metri leges mittere.*

[27] 'Exegese–Erbauung–*Delectatio*. Beiträge zu einer christlichen Poetik der Spätantike', in: W. Haug, (ed.), *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie* (*Germanistische Symposien-Berichtsbände* 3), Stuttgart 1979, 52–69, esp. 59–60.

is not merely signalled or indicated) through the 'emotional and mimetic intensity' of the expression. Little help is given in understanding the process of 'paraphrastische Eindringlichkeit', and in the present context at least it must remain opaque. But whatever the reader makes of it, it seems not unreasonable to claim this sacramental element, the most prominent part of Herzog's 'Christianisierung', though it may seem less obvious to others, as in some sense an example of exegesis in Juvencus.

Very considerable contributions have also been made to the study of Juvencus in a series of studies of relatively short episodes or themes. One of these has already been mentioned;[28] there are others, which began life as theses supervised by Klaus Thraede who has himself since his much-quoted article 'Epos' in RAC[29] rendered extensive and invaluable services to the study of Christian poetry.[30] These works are not only excellent examples of the still valuable tradition of classical commentary but often act as a salutary corrective to works with a wider and more theoretical scope. Fichtner ends his book by quoting, approvingly, Herzog's phrase: 'Juvencus schreibt mit dem Anspruch, die Bibel selbst vorzulegen' (93), but he gives a completely different role to exegesis: Juvencus 'carries out (in a high style) exegesis in detail', and 'interferes with his original on a massive scale'.[31] Moderns who say that Juvencus shows restraint in personal interpretation of the biblical message are wrong (196); so too are those—the majority of critics, in fact—who point to the wide divergence between Juvencus and Sedulius in this area. From the long list of examples of this detailed exegesis a few instances (deliberately a mixed bag, and of varied significance) may be given. The fact that Juvencus has the heavens 'split' rather than 'open' at the Baptism of Jesus (1. 356) might be thought not a matter of exegesis but rather a question of epic influence, or even the influence of the Greek word used by Mark creeping in to an otherwise Matthean sequence.[32] Similarly, one need not see an attempt to explain or interpret in the fact that Juvencus' Christ goes without water as well as food

[28] Heinsdorff (n. 8).

[29] K. Thraede, art. 'Epos', in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* vol. 5, Stuttgart 1962, 983–1042.

[30] M. Flieger, *Interpretationen zum Bibeldichter Iuvencus (Gethsemane, Festnahme Jesu und Kaiaphasprozess (4, 478–565))*, Stuttgart 1993; R. Fichtner, *Taufe und Versuchung Jesu in den Evangeliorum Libri quattuor des Bibeldichters Iuvencus (1. 346–408)*, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1994; W. Röttger, *Studien zur Lichtmotivik bei Iuvencus*, Münster 1996.

[31] Fichtner (n. 30), 205 and 200.

[32] Mark 1: 10 σχιζομένους.

(1. 370). But the issue is rather different at 3. 288–289, where Juvencus clearly feels the need to explain why Jesus should command the apostles not to divulge him (Matthew 16: 20), and adds the words 'so that only those worthy would know him' (*quo soli cognoscant talia digni*). Such additions, found from time to time, are unobtrusive. Another example of what might be called 'problem-solving' is demonstrated by Flieger when commenting on 4. 501–510.[33] In the temptation story Fichtner draws attention to what seems to be a conscious attempt to reduce the apparent initiative of the Devil in placing Christ in certain locations, following Origen—though as Flieger also notes,[34] Origen is not used at every opportunity.[35] It might be added that it is possible that Juvencus sometimes alludes to, or takes for granted, Origenist interpretations without spelling them out; for example, it is rather surprising—because this kind of detail normally receives minimal elaboration from him—that at 3. 316–317 he takes the trouble to stress that six days passed before the episode of the Transfiguration which he is about to relate.[36] Is this perhaps done to lead the reader to Origen's creational interpretation of these six days,[37] which would certainly not be out of place given the transcendent vision that follows?

One might disagree that the element of exegesis uncovered by the researches of these scholars is 'massive', but there is certainly considerable evidence of an exegetical intention, even if, as Fichtner's quotation of Herzog indicated, it is inconspicuous. Nonetheless, there is a need for caution in some respects. For example, Juvencus' presentation of the Virgin Mary is largely an interpretation by omission; it becomes clear when one compares Sedulius, but it would be truer to say that Sedulius, following Ambrose and Jerome, is here the exegete. And in some cases it should be said that although he undoubtedly gives explanatory exegesis—as in 1. 511–518, where the 'adversary' or 'accuser'[38] is equated with the body—he is probably not choosing from a variety of interpretations, but using one that was, at least in his time, familiar.[39] It is even possible that the impression of theologically sig-

[33] Flieger (n. 30), 101/2 and 208.
[34] Flieger (n. 30), 219–220.
[35] Fichtner (n. 30), 92–95.
[36] The Latin is quite elaborate: "passus bis terna dierum lumina converso terras transcurrere caelo".
[37] Origen, *Comm. in Matthaeum* 12: 36 (PG 13. 1066).
[38] The Latin word in Matthew 5: 25 is 'adversarius'.
[39] K. Thraede (n. 10), 888 (in a sub-section devoted to exegesis).

nificant exegesis is given when he has recourse to epic, as in 4. 106, where he recalls Vergil, *Aeneid* 9. 752.[40] Fichtner does raise the point of whether all this exegesis that he discovers is conscious or not (201), but the problem is best summed up by Röttger's comment in carefully chosen words on 1. 123 (17/18).[41] He comments—on Luke 1: 74, but this is of general application—that Juvencus' interpretation reflects an exegetical tradition, and he is reluctant to describe Juvencus' technique as exegesis, at least if this is used to mean *explicit* exegesis. The paraphraser's words rather *imply* a particular interpretation, and it is not stated 'expressis verbis'. In some ways, as Röttger recognizes, this view comes closer to Herzog's, at least in that the biblical text is nuanced through his method of presentation. This is not to deny that there is in Juvencus exegesis pure and simple, and indeed Röttger called for a complete breakdown, according to type, of the so-called exegetical material in Juvencus.

The closest approximation so far to Röttger's desideratum is in the article of Colombi,[42] who provides a carefully nuanced commentary on her numerous and various examples as well as arguing in detail the case for new examples of micro-exegesis in the sense outlined above. So where Herzog assumed that there was a reference to the eucharistic bread, Colombi, while saying that this interpretation is 'fuor dubbio', gives arguments to support her case: the interpretation of this request by (the bishop) Cyprian in *Orat.* 18; the use of *vitalis* (which usually in Juvencus refers to eternal life);[43] the description of the bread as "sancti"; the use of *substantia*—but this word is in fact a common aid to periphrasis in Juvencus, and so perhaps not theologically significant—and the possibility that the reading was to be found in the Vulgate[44] was already present to Juvencus. Other specimens of exegesis need not be examined for themselves. It is interesting to note that Colombi's intention, as indicated in her title, was to question the accuracy of Jerome's description of the paraphrase as 'almost word-for-word'. But it is not the case that

[40] Juvencus' version (Matthew 24:7) reads "fixa etiam solido per inania pondere tellus".

[41] Röttger (n. 29), 17–18.

[42] E. Colombi, '*Paene ad verbum*: gli *Evangeliorum libri* di Giovenco tra parafrasi e commento', *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997), 9–36.

[43] See R. Green, 'Approaching Christian Epic: the preface of Juvencus' in M. Gale (ed.), *Latin Epic and Didactic Poetry. Genre, Tradition and Originality*, Classical Press of Wales 2004, 214–215.

[44] 'supersubstantialem'; the Old Latin versions have 'cottidianum'.

Jerome's comment is invalidated by her discoveries; he will have seen the tendency to exegesis as clearly as any modern scholar, and indeed quotes line 1. 250/1, in which Juvencus, unlike the Evangelist, explains the significance of the gifts of the magi.[45] What emerges from this is rather the subtlety or at least brevity of Juvencus' exegetical additions. A good example may be seen in the apparently very close rendering of Matt. 7: 13[46] in 1. 679–680: "ite per angustam, iusti, super aethera portam, quam lata et spatiosa via est …". Two notable points, in fact, are made here. One is to give to this injunction an eschatological reference in the words 'super aethera'; the direction is heaven itself (other passages in Juvencus demonstrate this tendency, arguably here a kind of 'Christianisierung' as opposed to simple moralising). The other is to give the injunction a narrower focus, through the word 'iusti'. This word is extremely common in Juvencus; and far from being a convenient metrical filler—though indeed it may be found where there is no parallel in the original[47]—it is surely an important marker of Christian identity. The Christians who claim the promises of the Bible are those who have just survived unjust persecution and are now embarked on a process of dispensing justice to others.

I now wish to look at a more significant pattern of exegesis in the broader sense, arguably more subtle, though clear, to be sure, to a devoted reader of the Bible: one that can be traced almost exclusively by omission. As we have seen, omissions are significant; they are used in certain fixed ways, and so divergent examples arouse particular interest. Using such evidence one may, I believe, demonstrate that Juvencus' version was consciously anti-Arian. In spite of the importance of this theological issue, and the fact that the council of Nicaea, convened to combat the views of Arius, met only four or five years before Juvencus wrote, scholars have paid relatively little attention to this. In the course of an article mainly devoted to other matters[48] Testard suggested that it was a sign of his opposition to Arianism that Juvencus added his rendering of the words *ego hodie genui te* ('today I have begotten you')

[45] "Tus aurum myrrham regique hominique deoque / dona ferunt", on Matthew 2: 11.

[46] The Old Latin version reads "Intrate per angustam portam; quam lata et spatiosa est via…" (European).

[47] One example among many is 2. 559 "levis est mea sarcina iustis", to which compare Matthew 11: 30 "onus meum leve est".

[48] M. Testard, 'Juvencus et le sacré dans un épisode des *Evangeliorum libri* IV', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* (1990), 3–31.

that appear in many European versions of Luke 3: 22 at 1.362/3, in a passage which is otherwise Matthean. On our evidence, he could not have found it in a manuscript of Matthew, and so, because it is unusual for Juvencus to switch gospels like this, one naturally looks for a reason. But if his motive was to combat Arianism and stress that Christ was begotten, this was not the ideal verse to use: the word *hodie*, whatever its significance might be, chimes in very poorly with the anathema of Nicaea "there was a time when he was not".[49]

Conversely, it has been argued that Juvencus has no interest in the agendas or outcomes of Nicaea. According to Fichtner,[50] Juvencus had no interest in the Holy Spirit, and so not in the Arian conflict either; Flieger asserted that it would be risky to ascribe to Juvencus a position with regard to Nicaea.[51] But the Spirit is certainly not absent from the paraphrase. There are certainly, metrical problems,[52] but they are usually overcome. It is true that in his treatment of Matthew 28: 19 "baptizantes eos in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti" at 4. 796–797 Juvencus makes a close version of the phrases 'in the name of the Father', and 'in the name of the Son', but not of the phrase 'in the name of the Spirit'. Thus he does not mirror the baptismal formula so important to this Creed, as do others, but this need not be taken as evidence that he ignored this, or any other, outcome of Nicaea. Indeed, he has in fact a more elaborate expression in 4. 797 'let the breaths of the life-giving spirit run equally',[53] which even if more poetic than theological hardly shows a lack of interest. Once again, the stylistic pretensions of the poet must be taken to account alongside his theological proclivities.

In pursuance of my thesis that Juvencus takes a stance on the issues raised by Arius, the most important subject of the council, I wish to take into account four passages. Firstly, when he comes to Luke 2: 52 Juvencus says nothing about Christ increasing in wisdom, or in favour with God; "at puer obsequiis apte praedulcibus ambos / ad proprium semper cogens nectebat amorem" (1. 305–306). Here he develops in

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[49] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, London 1950, 216.

[50] Fichtner (n. 30), 79 and n. 288.

[51] Flieger (n. 30), 20.

[52] Juvencus' metrical practice is in general more careful than that of some later Christian writers. See in general J.T. Hatfield, *A Study of Juvencus*, Bonn 1890.

[53] The word 'pariter', here translated 'equally', need not be taken to imply that the Spirit's role in the Godhead is equal—it could mean no more than 'simultaneously' or 'also'—but a theological point cannot be founded on this.

his own way Luke's point about his *gratia…apud homines* ('favour among men'), but avoids the matter of his relationship to God. One must ask whether Juvencus wished to avoid the implication that his favour with God was less at this early period of his life than it later became. Luke's words might be taken to imply this, and certainly the passage was one of those subject to much debate in the controversy over the views of Arius, both in the early years and in the long later development of this conflict.

Secondly, let us look at 2.637, where Juvencus welds a section from John (5. 19–46) onto a Matthean discourse. One sentence ends with the words "verborum meritis dabitur sub iudice vita" (rendering Matthew 12: 37) and the next begins "quae genitor faciet, sectabitur omnia natus" (John 5: 19b). He thus does not, as we would expect, render the first part of John 5: 19: 'truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord…'. Perhaps he thought that the words might be taken to imply that the Son was less powerful than the Father, and removed this as a possible misunderstanding.

Thirdly, Christ's answer to his questioner at Mt. 19:17 "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" is recast and reduced. Christ's response to this was in one English version (the Revised Version): "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments". The man then asks, "Which?", and in reply Jesus gives a summary of the commandments. In Juvencus nothing corresponds to the words "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good, God". ("Quid me interrogas de bono? unus est bonus, Deus"). Lines 3. 503–504 read as follows: "his auctor vitae tum talia reddit Iesus: / 'nunc demum quaeris, veteri quae lege tenentur?'" The issue of Christ's goodness falls from sight, and with it a very difficult problem—a problem which would indeed be explained by orthodox scholars, but one that again created a potential stumbling-block.

Fourthly, when Christ is on the cross (Matthew 27: 46), Juvencus remarks (at 4. 692/3) that Christ called out in the Hebrew tongue, but makes no attempt to give the Hebrew words recorded by the evangelist: "et Christus magna genitorem voce vocabat / Hebraeae in morem linguae; sed nescia plebes / Heliam vocitare putat". To do so in the Hebrew version (Latinised as "eli, eli, lama sabachthani?") would be no easy task, admittedly, but he does not follow Matthew in his paraphrase either. In an earlier passage (1. 142 [Matthew 1: 23]), faced by the Hebrew name Emanuel, he provided the evangelist's interpreta-

tion *nobiscum deus*; and there is no obvious stylistic reason why in our present passage he should not have attempted to render Matthew's "Deus meus, deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?". Perhaps Juvencus wished to remove the danger of raising troublesome theological questions about the relationship of Father and Son? A reader might think that if Christ felt himself to have been abandoned, he was, or thought he was, less fully God than his father. Again, it seems that a potentially troublesome, or at least perplexing, passage is quietly removed.

A particular view of Jesus, then, is what Juvencus offers. He needed to grow up, like a normal boy, and later he said he was unable to do as many things as his Father; he claimed not to be good in the way that his Father was; and in some sense he was forsaken by his Father, or at least thought so, as he died. Matters of this kind, affecting the understanding of the status of Christ relative to God the Father, were of burning importance in the years immediately before Nicaea, and were at best only temporarily resolved by it. We do not know whether Juvencus or a close associate of his was present; it seems that few Spaniards were. The Spanish bishop Ossius of Cordova was indeed its chairman, but there is no evidence that Juvencus was acquainted with Ossius, or that their paths ever crossed. This is, however, not impossible. Nothing is known of Ossius' movements or duties in the years after Nicaea, and it is often assumed that he was back in Corduba, not so far from Elvira, pursuing his everyday episcopal tasks in an interval between seeing to matters of high imperial and theological importance.[54] Juvencus may have known others who were aware of the Arian doctrines, whether opponents or supporters. Testard, in the article already quoted (n. 48), mentions the Arianism of Potamius, bishop of Lisbon, who died in 360; conceivably Juvencus knew of him. But whatever the source of Juvencus' knowledge, it is not unreasonable to believe that he knew of such explosive ideas, or was at least aware of the interpretative problems which they were intended to solve.

His particular motive is uncertain: perhaps he found difficulties himself; perhaps he wished forthrightly to present a text shorn of such difficulties; perhaps he was minded for whatever reason to side with the established orthodoxy. The fact that he dedicated his work to the emperor Constantine gives some support to the last suggestion, though Constantine himself (like modern scholars until now) might not have

[54] V.C. de Clercq, *Ossius of Cordova: a contribution to the history of the Constantinian period*, Washington 1954.

noticed these adjustments in the presentation of the Christian saviour. Given the great care with which, as we have seen, Juvencus decides what to omit, these are certainly not incidental or unimportant. Nor could we dismiss these as, in Röttger's sense of the words, implicit rather than explicit. One should probably see here a response to certain trends—fundamentally, exegetical trends—rather than a direct confrontation with heresy, for it seems to have been much later that these views develop into a full-blown '-ism.' In this, as in other respects, he differs widely from Sedulius who, about a hundred years later, has a more open approach. Sedulius attacked and refuted Arius and Sabellius quickly but vehemently in his introductory book, before proceeding to a version of the Gospel miracles which is shot through with emphatic assertions of the deity of the incarnate Christ, implicitly aimed at Nestorian doctrines.[55] Juvencus is more subtle, even stealthy, in his exegesis of these verses and his removal of potentially awkward detail. No other kinds of anti-Arian exegesis have—at least so far—come to light to extend this picture, but enough has been done by the poet to establish an underlying 'Tendenz', and a typically inconspicuous but nonetheless forthright piece of 'Christianisierung' adapted to his times.

[55] C.P.E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, Leiden 1988, 39–44. In her review of this book C. Ratkowitsch, *JbAC* 32 (1989), 198/9 hastily assumes that the target is Arius. See also Green (n. 14), 242/3.

CANTATUR AD DELECTATIONEM: AMBROSE'S LYRIC POETRY

J. den Boeft

At the very beginning of the fifth century Nicetas of Remesiana visited Nola in Campania. When he left to return to Moesia, Paulinus wrote a propemptikon in Sapphic stanzas. In this poem he imaginarily accompanies his distinguished visitor on his journey home, first overland to Hydruntum (Otranto), where he boards a ship in order to cross to Greece. The sea will be smooth and a gentle westerly wind will be blowing; moreover, the ship will be protected by the sign of the cross. Then follows the 28th stanza, in P.G. Walsh's translation: "The sailors will joyfully sing their usual rowing-songs, but adapt the melodies to make them hymns. With their devoted voices they will draw breezes on to the sea to accompany them".[1] It is a wonderful scene, in which the christianization of life and manners has reached the domain of navigation, turning the rhythmic songs of the oarsmen into pious hymns. Presumably such a transformation would not have been wasted on the author of a sermon *De utilitate hymnorum*,[2] one of the few writings of Nicetas which have been preserved.

Of course, in this sermon Nicetas is not dealing with utopian situations, but with the reality of Church liturgy and the examples of hymn singing in various parts of Scripture. Within Paulinus' oeuvre we encounter the word *hymnus* in comparable contexts. As far as I can see, he does not refer to Ambrose's hymns, in spite of his respect and admiration for the Milanese bishop, which appears in the admittedly rather scarce evidence about the contacts between the two prominent churchmen.[3] The singing of hymns at the times of worship dates from the earliest phase of Christianity and developed further through the ages.

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[1] Paulinus Nolanus, Carm. 17.109–112: *nauitae laeti solitum celeuma / concinent uersis modulis in hymnos / et piis ducent comites in aequor / uocibus auras*.

[2] Nicetas of Remesiana, *De utilitate hymnorum*, ed. C.H. Turner, in: *JThS* 24 (1923) 225–253.

[3] S. Costanza, 'I rapporti tra Ambrogio e Paolino di Nola', in: G. Lazzati (ed.), *Ambrosius Episcopus*, Milan 1976, vol. 2, 220–232. D.E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, Berkeley 1999, 49–50.

Unfortunately, the relevant information which we have at our disposal leaves much to be desired and the same holds true as to the precise definition. Commenting on the well-known ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς (*psalmis, hymnis et canticis spiritualibus*) in Ephesians 5.19 and Colossians 3.16, Jerome remarks about *hymni*: *fortitudinem et maiestatem praedicant Dei et eiusdem semper uel beneficia uel facta mirantur*,[4] and Augustine contrives this definition in his explanation of psalm 72: "Hymns are songs containing the praise of God. In case of praise and indeed praise of God, but not sung, it is not a hymn. In order to be styled a hymn, it should have three components: praise, God and song."[5] Ambrose would have agreed with such reflections, as is illustrated by his words in *De officiis*: "We can fear, love, entreat, honour a man, but a hymn is specifically performed for God."[6]

So praise of God is the core of hymn singing, and, although this is not expressed in the quoted passages, it is quite clear that it is the singing of a group, a congregation or a choir, primarily in some type of liturgy. The psychagogic potential of such singing was not lost on Ambrose and he deliberately used it in his tenacious struggle against the Milanese homoeans, or Arians, as he used to call them. When he was accused of mesmerizing his flock by his hymns, he cheerfully conceded that this was what he was after: *plane nec hoc abnuo*, "Yes indeed, and I am not denying this".[7]

In my contribution, however, I shall not go into this aspect, but rather focus on the poetical side of Ambrose's remarkable creation. Whereas in the field of Christian Latin poetry others had already explored the possibilities of epic poetry, he became the pioneer of truly lyric poetry, choosing an existing metrical pattern, which had never functioned independently.[8] By his own example he proved the huge potential of this metrical pattern, which he moulded into its succesful form: eight stanzas of four verses, each in the jambic dimeter, in its pure form eight syllables. The first characteristic which catches the

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[4] Hier. *in Epist. ad Eph.* 5.19, PL 26,561.

[5] *Si sit laus, et non sit Dei, non est hymnus; si sit laus, et Dei laus, et non cantetur, non est hymnus. Oportet ergo ut, si sit hymnus, habeat haec tria: et laudem, et Dei, et canticum* (Aug. *Enarr. In Ps.* LXII 1; cf. id., *ib.* CXLVIII 17).

[6] *Sed possumus et hominem timere, diligere, rogare, honorare; hymnus specialiter Deo dicitur* (Ambr. *De officiis* 1.221).

[7] *Hymnorum quoque meorum carminibus deceptum populum ferunt, plane nec hoc abnuo* (Ambr. *Epist.* 75a, 34 Zelzer).

[8] See J. den Boeft, 'Ambrosius Lyricus', in: J. den Boeft, A. Hilhorst, *Early Christian Poetry* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 22), Leiden 1993, 78–79.

eye and, for that matter, the ear, is *brevity*. This requires considerable poetical skill; one needs an economical choice of words and a sustained concentration on what is essential. Now I do not intend to declare that Ambrose lived up to this high poetical standard in each of the 112 stanzas of the 14 hymns which are ascribed to him with some degree of probability, or even in the 64 stanzas of the eight hymns the authenticity of which is beyond doubt or at worst not entirely certain.[9] The least one can say, however, is that there are more than enough stanzas and individual verses which convincingly prove the viability of Ambrose's lyric experiment.

A few examples may demonstrate this. The first one is the fourth stanza of the eighth hymn, for the natale of the martyr Agnes. Although young Agnes was guarded at home by her anxious parents during a period of persecution, she managed to break out and then:

> *Prodire quis nuptum putet,*
> *sic laeta uultu ducitur,*
> *nouas uiro ferens opes,*
> *dotata censu sanguinis.*

The stanza is an example of the metre in its purest form: eight syllables in each verse, with a short syllable in the third and seventh position. The reader may notice how much can be made visible in no more than fifteen words: from Agnes' happy face people in the street (*quis*) conclude that she and her cortege (*ducitur*) are on the way to her bridegroom; this conclusion is correct, but in an entirely different way: the rich gift for her future husband (*uiro*) is not the usual one (*nouas*); in fact, the dowry she is provided with consists of her own blood (*dotata censu sanguinis*). Possibly some erudite readers of the text were reminded of Iphigeneia at Aulis and noticed the contrast with Lucretius' masterly description of her plight in *De rerum natura* 1.84–100.[10]

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[9] See for a discussion of the authenticity of the various hymns p. 376–413 in M. Simonetti, 'Studi sull'innologia popolare cristiana dei primi secoli', *Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Anno CCCXLIX*, Serie ottava, Memorie. Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, vol. IV, Rome 1952, 341–484, and Ambroise de Milan, *Hymnes*. Texte établi, traduit et annoté sous la direction de Jacques Fontaine, Paris 1992, 93–102.

[10] She had been persuaded to come to Aulis in order to be married to Achilles, only to find that she was to be sacrificed in the interest of the campaign against Troy. Cf. especially vs 95–99:

> *nam sublata uirum manibus tremebundaque ad aras*
> *deductast, non ut sollemni more sacrorum*
> *perfectoque posset claro comitari Hymenaeo,*

Another example is the second stanza of hymn 10, for the natale of Victor, Nabor and Felix, men who had migrated from Africa to Northern Italy and had suffered martyrdom there:

torrens harena quos dedit
anhela solis aestibus
extrema terrae finium
exulque nostri nominis.

In thirteen words the heat of the faraway desert on the fringe of Roman civilization is evoked, with in my view a particularly brilliant example of poetical foregrounding in *anhela solis aestibus*, "steaming with the heat of the sun". The choice of words and the combination of words in the two quoted stanzas are unparalleled. I cannot refrain from adding one other instance of an entirely original phrase: the first verse of the second stanza of the famous first hymn (*aeterne rerum conditor*). The first stanza was concerned with God's creation of time or rather times. After this the second stanza begins with *praeco diei iam sonat*. In the whole of Latin literature before Ambrose there is no parallel for *praeco diei*! In combination with the urgency expressed by *iam* and the sound heard in *sonat* this description of the cock's crow contrives that by four well-chosen words we know at once the precise time Ambrose wants us to be aware of: the still of the night in its very last moments before daybreak.

These few examples may have shown which possibilities lay waiting in what Fontaine called "la simplicité géniale de l'hymne ambrosienne",[11] and in another context the French scholar remarked about Ambrose: "Il vise…à des raccourcis doctrinaux et lyriques d'une ellipse quasi horatienne."[12] This may be formulated rather exuberantly, but the comparison with Horace almost forces itself on anyone studying these hymns, and Fontaine's reference to the eight syllable glyconeus, loved by Horace (*audax omnia perpeti* in *Carmina* 1.3.25 is a good exam-

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sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso
hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis.

("For seized by men's hands, all trembling was she led to the altars, not that, when the ancient rite of sacrifice was fulfilled, she might be escorted by the clear cry of 'Hymen', but in the very moment of marriage, a pure victim she might foully fall beneath a father's slaughtering stroke in sorrow herself" [tr. Cyril Bailey]).

[11] J. Fontaine, 'Prose et poésie: l'interférence des genres et des styles dans la création littéraire d'Ambroise de Milan', in: G. Lazzati (ed.), *Ambrosius Episcopus*, Milan 1976, vol. 1, 124–170 (the quotation can be found on p. 159).

[12] Ambroise, *Hymnes* (n. 9) 49.

ple), is not irrelevant.[13] Nevertheless, Ambrose never refers to Horace and, judging by the available indices in the various volumes of the Viennese edition, in his entire oeuvre allusions to Horace's poetry are rather scarce. So it definitely looks like congeniality rather than whichever sort of derivation. In poetical respect Ambrose, like so many members of the contemporary elite, was much more influenced by Vergil. For this we can consult the catalogue drawn up long ago by Sister Mary Dorothea Diederich.[14] But even in Vergil's case borrowings from his works are few and far between in Ambrose's hymns. It seems that the poetically gifted ecclesiastical manager was inspired by what I would provisionally call the spirit of classical poetry rather than by the exact letter of its various specimens.

There could, however, also be another force at work here, viz. what Michael Roberts has called the "jewelled style" of much late antique poetry. The scathing verdict on his book by J.B. Hall is not entirely unjustified, yet Roberts' attention to the "self-contained compositional unit" (141) and the ekphraseis, to the "preference for asyndeton and short phrases" (41), to the love of variation and the mosaic-like style of composition (77 ff.), is by no means otiose.[15] In spite of his classical outlook, Ambrose must have picked up something of these general trends in contemporary poetical style.

These reflections may have shown that poetical skill and technique in the widest sense possible of the terms are conspicuous in Ambrose's poetry. However, contents and objectives (the what and the why) are at least as important as form (the how). Of course, these aspects cannot be separated, as is clearly visible in Horace's *carmina*, where it would be simply impossible to change the form without changing the contents. As to the question why Ambrose began writing this poetry we have to tread warily. He himself only uses the words *poeta* and *poeticus* about pagan poetry, in phrases like *fabulae poetarum* and *figmenta poetica*. Then he never speaks about his own hymns, with one exception, in the passage I quoted from already in note 7, letter 75a, section 34, which he concludes with *grande carmen, quo nihil potentius*, playing with the two meanings of *carmen*, magical formula and poem. The poetry of his hymns mesmerizes the singers with the same power as magical

[13] J. Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'occident chrétien*, Paris 1981, 138.

[14] Sister Mary Dorothea Diederich, *Vergil in the Works of St. Ambrose*, Washington 1931.

[15] M. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style. Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Ithaca and London 1989, reviewed by J.B. Hall in *The Classical Review* n.s. 41 (1991) 359–361.

texts intend to do. We are, however, not at a loss about his thoughts on poetry. Ambrose paid much profound attention to the poetry of the psalms, as appears in both the *Expositio Psalmi centesimi et duodevicesimi* and the *Explanatio Psalmorum XII*, generally dated to the last decade of his life.[16] Specifically the introduction to the latter work is most instructive for the present subject, the more so, since we can compare Ambrose's reflections with those of his main model Basil in the introduction to his *Sermons on the Psalms*. Here we can benefit from the convenient synopsis in Pizzolato's study of forty years ago.[17] Basil begins his introduction by stating that every part of Scripture has been inspired by God and is beneficial (ὠφέλιμος). Its various parts each provide their specific benefit, but the book of Psalms comprises all these benefits, healing the wounds of the human soul and generating wise thoughts with some harmonious persuasion and pleasure: this was in fact the strategy of the Holy Spirit, who understood the value of delight, which makes man accept that which is beneficial, a strategy comparable to doctors who, when they want their patients to drink a bitter medicine, put some honey on the brim of the cup.[18] The reader will be reminded of Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.936–938.[19] When we turn to Ambrose's introduction, it soon becomes clear that 'delight' has been considerably upgraded. Whereas Basil regards τὸ τερπνόν as a well-chosen ingredient of the presentation, in Ambrose's view *delectatio* belongs to the very core, not subordinated to the content, but cooperating on equal terms: "In the psalms teaching rivals with charm; singing produces delight, learning knowledge. For instructions which are given with too much force have no future, but what pleased you when you apprehended it, will, once poured into your heart, usually

[16] Cf. M. Zelzer, 'Zur Chronologie der Werke des Ambrosius. Überblick über die Forschung von 1974 bis 1997', in: L.F. Pizzolato, M. Rizzi (edd.), *Nec timeo mori*, Milan 1998, 73–92.

[17] L.F. Pizzolato, *La "Explanatio Psalmorum XII". Studio letterario sulla esegesi di Sant'Ambrogio*, Milan 1965, 76–87.

[18] Bas. *Hom. in Ps.* 1 (PG 29, 209sqq.): Πᾶσα Γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος … Ἡ δὲ τῶν Ψαλμῶν βίβλος τό ἐκ πάντων ὠφέλιμον περιείληφε…Τὸ ἐκ τῆς μελῳδίας τερπνὸν τοῖς δόγμασιν ἐκατέμιξεν, ἵνα τῷ προσηνεῖ καὶ λείῳ τῆς ἀκοῆς τὸ ἐκ τῶν λόγων ὠφέλιμον λανθανόντως ὑποδεξώμεθα· κατὰ τοὺς σοφοὺς τῶν ἰατρῶν, οἳ τῶν φαρμάκων τὰ αὐστηρότερα πίνειν διδόντες τοῖς κακοσίτοις μέλιτι πολλάκις τὴν κύλικα περιχρίουσι..

[19] *Sed ueluti pueris absinthia taetra medentes / cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum / contingunt mellis dulci flauoque liquore*, "but even as healers, when they essay to give loathsome wormwood to children, first touch the rim all round the cup with the sweet golden moisture of honey" (Lucr. 1.936–938, tr. Cyril Bailey).

not slip away."[20] Here delight and pleasure, *delectatio* and *suauitas*, are no longer merely an asset, they are indispensable. Right at the beginning of the *Commentary on Psalm 118* Ambrose expresses this in even stronger terms: "sweetness is the hallmark of every 'moral' teaching, yet most of all the ears are delighted and the mind entranced by the pleasing sound of poetry and the sweetness of psalmody."[21] Here *doctrina* itself is *suauis*, but it needs a maximizing of this delight to be fully effective. Such phrases can only be written by a person who is convinced of the decisive value of esthetics. At the end of her thorough analysis of the introduction to the *Explanatio Psalmorum XII* in her monograph about this work, Paola Moretti rightly notes how earnestly Ambrose wants to marshal everything which is "funzionale alla comunicazione della bellezza del messaggio cristiano."[22] One is entitled to conclude that in his own way Ambrose agrees with Horace's famous phrase that those poets who have the knack to combine *prodesse* and *delectare* should be regarded as the best: *omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci / lectorem delectando pariterque monendo* (*AP* 343–344). Note that the metaphor *miscuit* expresses the indissoluble bond of the aspects.[23]

What Horace is showing in this passage, is directly akin to the well-known trio of rhetorical tasks *docere, delectare, mouere*. The orator should provide his audience with clear information and instruction, delight the hearers with his stylistically well-wrought language and persuade them to perform certain actions. A competent discharge of these duties makes a speech convincing and efficient. In late antiquity the epideictic or laudatory type of rhetoric, in which persons or virtues were praised, gained a prime importance. For speeches of this type an orator's ability to generate delight is indispensable. In a helpful and instructive recent paper Luigi Pizzolato has connected this requirement

[20] *Certat in psalmo doctrina cum gratia; simul cantatur ad delectationem, discitur ad eruditionem. Nam uiolentiora praecepta non permanent; quod autem cum suauitate perceperis, id infusum semel praecordiis non consueuit elabi* (Ambr. *Explan. Ps. XII* 1.10).

[21] *Cum suauis omnis doctrina moralis sit, tum maxime suauitate carminis et psallendi dulcedine delectat aures animumque demulcet* (Ambr. *Expos. Ps. CXVIII* 1).

[22] P.F. Moretti, *Non harundo sed calamus. Aspetti letterari della "Explanatio psalmorum XII" di Ambrogio*, Milan 2000, 116.

[23] Cf. R. Herzog, 'Exegese–Erbauung–Delectatio. Beiträge zu einer christlichen Poetik der Spätantike', in: W. Haug (ed.), *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie*, Stuttgart 1979, 52–69, B. Studer, 'Delectare et prodesse. Zu einem Schlüsselwort der patristischen Exegese', in: *Mémorial Jean Gribomont* (= *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 27), Rome 1988, 555–581.

with Ambrose's episcopal responsibilities.[24] I feel no hesitation to make full use of it. Pizzolato points out that Ambrose at the beginning of his ecclesiastical career had a notable predilection for the epideictic type of rhetoric. There are two reasons for this: in his previous governmental career he had become accustomed to it, and secondly, at the time he lacked the doctrinal expertise and consequently the confidence needed for *docere* or *probare*. In his early works on *uirginitas* this ascetic ideal is not argued but praised. In such a type of rhetoric, *delectatio* is a prime value: whereas other Christian and even pagan authors show themselves somewhat reserved as to *delectare* as an objective, Ambrose attaches great importance to it. In order to succeed in reaching this objective two aspects are of prime value: *moralitas* and *suauitas*. With timely references to rhetorical theory Pizzolato explains the specifically rhetorical meaning of *moralitas*: this has to do with human nature and experience, the everyday problems of human conduct etc. Jesus Christ had an open eye for these, his approach was *moralis* and therefore *suauis*, and the same can be witnessed in the Psalms. The counterpart of such *moralitas* is the 'vehement' style: David's manner was *moralis*, gentle and persuasive, the opposite of the *uehementia* of Job's tragic lament.[25]

After the initial phase of his episcopal career Ambrose gradually mastered the other traditional oratorical tasks: *docere / probare* and *mouere / flectere*. Nevertheless, "Ambrogio sempre rilutta ad uscire dai generi epidittico e deliberativo, ai quali lo predisponevano il temperamento poetico e la precedente funzione politica esercitata".[26] To put it somewhat boldly in my own words: the lyric poet is the direct relative of the practitioner of epideictic rhetoric, and they meet one another in the conviction that *delectatio* is indispensable. This is precisely what Jerome rejected so heartily, witness for instance his allegorical interpretation of the pods (*siliquae*) in the parable of the prodigal son: "the food of demons consisting in poetry, wordly wisdom and the ostentatious display of rhetoric. These delight everyone by their pleasing appearance."[27] Small wonder that Ambrose was not among his favourites, which contrasts rather sharply with Augustine's feelings when listening to Ambrose's sermons: "I was delighted by the attractive charm of his

[24] L.F. Pizzolato, 'Ambrogio e la retorica: le finalità del discorso', in: L.F. Pizzolato, M. Rizzi (edd.), *Nec timeo mori*, Milan 1998, 235–265.

[25] Pizzolato (n. 24), 247.

[26] Pizzolato (n. 24), 256.

[27] *Daemonum cibus est carmina poetarum, saecularis sapientia, rhetoricorum pompa uerborum. Haec sua omnes suauitate delectant* (Hier. *Ep.* 21.13).

language."[28] Later, in the fourth book of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine had more problems with delight (*delectatio*).[29]

Following in the footsteps of Giuseppe Lazzati,[30] Pizzolato ascribes an "anima di poeta" to Ambrose, and the various studies of Fontaine express this idea with richly adorned eloquence. In his introduction to the edition of Ambrose's hymns he states: "Plus encore que tout poète chrétien, l'hymnographe est en effet un 'nouveau psalmiste'."[31] In such a view, which to me seems quite plausible, Ambrose's characterization of the Psalms can be applied to his own hymns too. This entails a further question, viz. whether Ambrose's predilection for poetical *delectatio* is merely a strategy on the textual level or rests upon a deeper foundation in creation itself. The answer should definitely tend to the latter, as Pizzolato also indicates in his study. In fact, in the very first section of the *Explanatio Psalmorum XII* Ambrose expounds that *delectatio* was an intrinsic element in the Creator's purpose with his creation, which the devil exploited for his destructive plan: "The finest instrument to set the tune (*incentiuum*) for virtue which God offered was delight in the happiness which was to come; that leaving the path of virtue could also be vehemently spurred by delight was contrived by the devil."[32] The sly tricks of this enemy consisted in deceptively showing the outward appearance of creation (*speciem praetendit naturae*), for, as we all know (*enim*), the works of His hands (*opera sua*) delighted the Lord.[33] The havoc wrought by the devil's trickery[34] was repaired by David: "by the gift of his psalmody he established something which amounted to

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[28] *delectabar suauitate sermonis* (Aug. *Conf.* 5.23).

[29] K. Pollmann, *Doctrina christiana. Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer berücksichtigung von Augustinus, De doctrina christiana*, Fribourg 1996, 237–241; B. Kursawe, *docere—delectare—movere. Die officia oratoris bei Augustinus in Rhetorik und Gnadenlehre*, Paderborn 2000, 82–84, 132–138, and Vessey and Westra in this volume.

[30] G. Lazzati, 'Esegesi e poesia in Sant'Ambrogio', *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Annuario* 1957–1958, 1958–1959, 75–91, id., *Il valore letterario della esegesi ambrosiana*, Milan 1960.

[31] Ambroise, *Hymnes* (see note 9), 15.

[32] *Summum incentiuum uirtutis proposuit deus futurae beatitudinis delectationem; uehemens quoque calcar erroris delectationem esse diabolus excogitauit* (Ambr. *Explan. Ps. XII* 1.1).

[33] *…speciem praetendit naturae. Delectarunt enim opera sua dominum, delectarunt prima naturae exordia…*(Ambr. *Explan. Ps. XII* 1.1).

[34] Cf. Ambr. *De paradiso* 1.4 about the Garden of Eden: *locus autem eius, in quo est plantatus, voluptas dicitur*, an idea which already occurs in Philo, e.g. *Leg. All.* 1.45, *Somn.* 2.242, *Post. Cain* 32. The snake, however, slyly turned the Creator's intention into the wrong direction: *serpentis typum accepit delectatio corporalis… delectatio igitur prima est origo peccati* (*De paradiso* 15.73). The negative remarks about 'delight' in *De paradiso* should be consistently interpreted from this viewpoint.

(*instar*) a heavenly conduct."[35] God's grace is present everywhere in Scripture, but preeminently so in the sweet book of the Psalms, *dulcis liber Psalmorum*.

The Lord was delighted by the start of his creation; looking at it, he said: "very good" (*bona ualde*).[36] These two words are a direct quotation from Gen 1.31 and the entire phrase is an interpretation of this verse and, most important, the very gist of this interpretation is that 'good' implies 'delight'. This can be witnessed in the universe and in nature. Ambrose therefore concludes: *naturalis igitur delectatio est*. Such a view is continuously implicit in Ambrose's *Hexameron* and it is also made explicit in various passages. For instance, referring to the members of the Christian community the author characterizes them *inter alia* by saying: "these are the sort of people who derive pleasure not from looking at purple carpets or expensive tapestries, but at this beautifully constructed world",[37] or his invitation at the beginning of the sermon about the sixth day of creation: "enter with me in this great and wonderful theatre where the entire creation can be viewed."[38] This phrase is the more remarkable in that superficially it reminds us of the words of Basil at the end of his seventh homily on the six days of creation: τὸ σεμνὸν τοῦτο θέατρον, as is duly noted by editors and translators, but with these words the Cappadocian bishop means his congregation which is listening to his sermon!

Near the end of his sixth and final book Ambrose begins a long and jubilant passage on the beauty of the human body, "which, as nobody will deny, surpasses other creatures in beauty and grace."[39] Adjectives like *uenustus, gratus, suauis* follow in quick succession. But the animal world too contains many admirable phenomena. Of course: "everything is penetrated by God's wisdom, which fills everything, and this can be gathered more fully from the senses of irrational beings than from the the learned discussions of rational beings; for the testimony of nature has more power than the conclusions of science." And: "for we

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[35] *reparare eam studens et reformare psallendi munere caelestis nobis instar conuersationis instituit* (*ib*. 1.3).

[36] *quae uidens dominus ait: 'bona ualde'* (Ambr. *Explan. Ps. XII* 1.1).

[37] *…quibus non purpurea peripetasmata, non aulaea pretiosa spectare uoluptati sit, sed hanc pulcherrimam mundi fabricam* (Ambr. *Hex*. 3.5).

[38] *ingredimini mecum in hoc magnum et admirabile totius visibilis theatrum creaturae* (Ambr. *Hex*. 6.2), τὸ σεμνὸν τοῦτο θέατρον (Bas. *Hex*. 164 C).

[39] *Sed iam de ipso aliqua dicenda sunt corpore hominis, quod praestantius ceteris decore et gratia esse quis abnuat*? (Ambr. *Hex*, 6.54).

possess a better teacher of truth in nature: without anyone's instruction she pours sweet health into our senses."[40] Such phrases are examples of Ambrose's more pronounced depreciation of scientific knowledge when compared with his direct model Basil. It is one of the notable differences which Henke has brought out in his meticulous study of a selection of passages in both works.[41] Ambrose prefers to look at nature through the glasses which the interpretation of Scripture has provided him. Now, when leafing through the pages of his *Hexameron*, most readers will in some way or other quickly detect the heritage of Stoic philosophy (especially as it is expounded in the second book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*), the ancient zoological tradition from Aristotle to Aelian, the influences of paradoxography, the huge presence of Vergil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid* and so on. There is, indeed, ample room for 'Quellenforschung' here. As to the biological tradition in general I would mention Sabine Föllinger's helpful survey.[42] However, my attention is not so much focused on the direct or indirect sources of Ambrose's elucidations, but on the actual result of his appropriation of this heritage. This result consists in a coherent view of God's creation, the celestial bodies, plants, trees, animals etc., as a meaningful and delightful universe, the elements of which, moreover, are not locked up within their own existence, but refer to others. For instance, when Christ says: "I am the vine, you are the branches", he invites us to use the vine as an example for the organization of our life, *ad nostrae uitae institutionem*. This inspires Ambrose to enlarge on the vine's process of coming into bud until its produce of grapes. That process is a lesson for man's growth to the maturity of perfection. The various animals also provide all sorts of lessons. Here too Scripture shows the way: "Go to the ant, you sluggard, observe her ways and gain wisdom." And Isaiah calls Israel's watchmen "dumb dogs that cannot bark." True dogs bark to help their owners and protect their houses. "You too should learn from this to set your voice in motion for Christ, when wolves enter Christ's pen". There are many more examples, which time and again show the structural parallels between the life of plants and animals and that of men.

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[40] *omnia penetrat diuina sapientia, inplet omnia, idque locupletius ex inrationabilium sensibus quam ex rationabilium disputatione colligitur* (Ambr. *Hex*. 6.21). *melior enim magistra ueritatis natura est. haec sine ullius magisterio suauitatem sanitatis nostris infudit sensibus* (*ib*.).

[41] R. Henke, *Basilius und Ambrosius über das Sechstagewerk. Eine vergleichende Studie* (= ΧΡΗΣΙΣ VII), Basel 2000.

[42] S. Föllinger, 'Biologie in der Spätantike', in: G. Wöhrle (ed.), *Geschichte der Mathematik und der Naturwissenschaften in der Antike*, Band 1: Biologie, Stuttgart 1999, 253–281.

God's creation is designed both for *delectare* and its counterpart *prodesse*. The human soul, which has been made *ad imaginem Dei*, is free to wander in its thoughts and imagination, and thus to make the most of this.[43]

Such a way of looking at the world is quite apt and fruitful to be exploited in lyric poetry. Grasping what is specific for this poetry is not an easy task. We are not helped by ancient literary criticism and theory. Neither in his *Epistula ad Pisones*, better known as *Ars Poetica*, nor in his two other literary epistles, does Horace, who composed these pieces after the first three books of his *carmina*, really go into this matter. The reason for this was the traditional literary systematisation, in which epic and drama prevailed. When one turns to modern handbooks, one finds much worthwhile and helpful information, but a truly satisfactory demarcation of lyric poetry is lacking. References to emotional involvement or personal feelings and the like are not convincing, for epic poets and dramatists can write with huge empathy. Nor can the absence of narrative or dialogue function as distinctive, since narrative sequences and dialogue are not a rarity in lyric poetry. Unfortunately, filling this gap is quite beyond my reach, but I venture to mention at least one characteristic which strikes me as relevant, in any case for Ambrose. In lyric poetry a poet often expresses a perception of reality which differs from the ordinary. This can manifest itself in focusing on the very essence of an event or a situation or in seeing something else within a particular situation. In Horace's propemptikon on the occasion of Vergil's departure for Greece the poet visualizes the dangers inherent in navigation and within this visualization he perceives man's basic presumptuous impudence: *audax omnia perpeti* (*carmina* 1.3.25).

A few examples from Ambrose's hymns may illustrate my conviction. For a case of focusing on the essential I return to the second stanze of the tenth hymn in honour of the three African martyrs, where the heat of their faraway land is made tangible. I cannot help thinking of a phrase in Ambrose's inspired digression on the possibilities of human imagination: *illos uidemus qui degunt in Africa*.[44] But perceiving something not directly visible to any onlooker is more striking and needs to be explained. My first example is the sixth stanza of the

[43] *ad nostrae uitae institutionem* (*Hex*. 3.52) *canes ergo sunt, qui nouerint latrare pro dominis, nouerint sua tecta defendere. unde et tu disce uocem tuam exercere pro Christo, quando ouile Christi incursant lupi* (*Hex*. 6.17) *non ergo caro potest esse ad imaginem dei, sed anima nostra, quae libera est et diffusis cogitationibus atque consiliis huc atque illuc uagatur* (*Hex*. 6.45).

[44] Ambr. *Hex*. 6.45.

hymn devoted to the martyrdom of the Roman deacon Lawrence. The authenticity of this hymn, which is often quoted by its first verse: *Apostolorum supparem*, has been persuasively defended by Nauroy.[45] It deals with the three phases of Lawrence's martyrium: its prediction by the martyr pope Sixtus, Lawrence's shrewd deceiving of the persecutor and his subsequent death by being roasted on a grid, which is the best-known part of his *passio*. In the fifth stanza of the hymn the persecutor orders the deacon to hand over the treasuries of the church (18: *census sacratos*) within three days. After this the sixth stanza runs as follows:

21 *Spectaculum pulcherrimum!*
Egena cogit agmina
inopesque monstrans praedicat:
"*Hi sunt opes ecclesiae.*"

In a mere twelve words, combining brevity and visualization, the poet sketches how Lawrence made full use of a completely divergent perception of true values to deceive the persecutor. A few explanatory remarks may suffice. The visual aspect is immediately introduced with *spectaculum*.[46] In vs. 22 translators and interpreters tend to follow Prudentius' understanding of this verse in his imitation in *Peristephanon* 2.144: *cogens in unum et congregans*. However, the usual meaning of *cogere agmen* is 'to bring up the rear of a marching column', as e.g. in the metaphor in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.114–115: *stellae, / quarum agmina cogit Lucifer*, where the same metrically handy plural is used. The poet of the hymn adds *egena*, the most conspicuous aspect of the 'parade', at the end of which Lawrence emerges with his visually supported (*monstrans*) explanation, in which *egenus* is aptly exchanged for *inops*, in order to contrive an admittedly not original,[47] but quite functional paronomasia.

The same event is prosaically formulated in Ambrose's *De officiis* 2.140: *a quo* (Lawrence) *cum quaererentur thesauri ecclesiae, promisit se demonstraturum. Sequenti die pauperes duxit. Interrogatus ubi essent thesauri quos promi-*

[45] G. Nauroy, 'Le martyre de Laurent dans l'hymnodie et la prédication des IVe et Ve siècles et l'authenticité ambrosienne de l'hymne "Apostolorum supparem"', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 35 (1989) 44–82.

[46] Apart from the 'beautiful spectacle' offered by the parade of the poor, the persecutor being made a laughing stock is also worthy to be seen. One is reminded of a remark about an electoral reverse in one of Cicero's letters: *hoc tibi non inuideo, caruisse te pulcherrimo spectaculo et Lentuli Cruris repulsi uultum non uidisse*, "One thing I don't envy you—you missed a really beautiful sight, Lentulus Crus' face when he heard his defeat" (*Ad familiares* 8.4.1, translation Shackleton Bailey).

[47] See for this *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, vol. VII 1.1753.33 ff.

serat, ostendit pauperes dicens "Hi sunt thesauri ecclesiae." In case the hymn is not authentic, this is the oldest testimony to the middle part of Lawrence's martyrium. Be this as it may, the poetry of the hymn pictures a scene and in this differs from the matter of fact information in the prose text.

For my second example I refer to a stanza already presented above, Agnes' appearance on the street. Here we have the direct impression of the chance passer-by (*quis*) contrasted by what was really happening. The examples of Lawrence and Agnes may not be spectacular, but they can function as the upbeat for a more remarkable case: the second and third stanza of the sixth hymn in honour of the evangelist John. Its authenticity is not endorsed by all experts, but Fontaine marshals some quite persuasive arguments to support it.[48] For clarity's sake I also quote the first stanza.

Amore Christi nobilis
et filius tonitrui,
arcana Iohannes Dei
fatu reuelauit sacro.

Captis solebat piscibus
patris senectam pascere;
turbante dum nutat salo,
immobilis fide stetit.

Hamum profundo merserat,
piscatus est Verbum Dei;
iactauit undis retia,
uitam leuauit omnium.

In order to make myself clear, I am obliged to state first, 'dogmatically' I am afraid, that I cannot agree with the heavily allegorical interpretation of Ambrose's hymns which has become quite usual and which also permeates the pages of the commentary of Fontaine and his team, an admirable and indeed indispensable scholarly instrument.[49] The verses 5–6 quoted above sketch the everyday situation of John; the imperfect tense *solebat* provides the background for what is to follow

[48] Ambroise, *Hymnes* (n. 9), 305–308.

[49] See for the bibliographical details note 9. My point of view can be found in J. den Boeft, '*Aeterne rerum conditor*: Ambrose's poem about time', in: F. García Martínez, G.P. Luttikhuizen, *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome. Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 82), Leiden 2003, 27–40.

in verses 7sqq. John obviously is a fisherman of comparatively young age, who provides a living for his retired father. Then we move to a particular moment: *stetit* in the perfect tense, the most apt tense in a narrative sequence. The swell of the water (*salum*) is perturbing (*turbante*), but this had no real impact on the experienced fisherman, who stood in his boat, loyal (*fide*) to his task, watching the fishhook which he had plunged (*merserat*) into the deep water. For me this is a poetically contrived vignette, which pictures the essentials of a fisherman's life and work with economic brevity. Loading this picture with all sorts of allegorical connotations and explanations simply kills the poetry and, worse, obscures Ambrose's strategy. Within the scene of John's everyday task as a fisherman the poet perceives an entirely different form of fishing, and, remarkably, not the one promised by Jesus in the synoptic gospels: "I will make you fishers of men".[50] Instead, a far bolder, paradoxical image is put forward: John has caught God's Son himself, aptly denoted with a phrase reminding of the beginning of his Gospel: *Verbum Dei*. I have only been able to find one passage which bears some similarity to this conceit, viz. Augustine's *Tractatus in Iohannem* 42.1: "the Word of God is, and should be for those who believe, comparable to a fishhook for the fish: it catches when it is caught."[51] But the explicit character of a comparison, and, for that matter, the entire context make this far less bold. Verse 11 could allude to Luc. 5.4 "Let down your nets for a catch", but verse 12 can only allude to the beginning of the fourth Gospel: "In him was life, and that life was the light of humankind."[52] At the same time it is a beautiful closure of this particular sequence: John used to take care of the well-being of one person (*patris senectam*), but now the life of all men is within his reach. These two stanzas of hymn 6 can and should be compared to §132 of Ambrose's *De uirginitate*: *Vide quid piscator etiam iste profecerit. Dum in mari lucrum suum quaerit uitam inuenit omnium. Lembum deseruit, Deum repperit; scalmum reliquit, Verbum inuenit; lina laxauit, fidem uinxit; plicauit retia, homines eleuauit; mare spreuit, caelum acquisiuit; his ergo piscator dum ipse turbato agitatur salo, mobili mentes statione nutantes fundauit in petra*. The contrast of prose and poetry is quite obvious: the prose passage is entirely composed by way of rhetorical antitheta, whereas the hymn makes a scene visible and detects a deeper

[50] Mt 4.19, Mc 1.17.

[51] *Sic enim est sermo Dei, et sic esse debet fidelibus, tamquam pisci hamus; tunc capit quando capitur* (Aug. *Tract. In Ioh.* 42.1).

[52] Jn 1.4.

layer within that scene, in which the fisherman and the evangelist can be persuasively identified as one and the same person.[53]

Finally, one of the *bona opera* of God's creation is time, which manifests itself in a variety of alternations. Ambrose does not regard time as an enemy or as a troubling philosophical problem, but as a benefit for humankind, partaking in the delightful charm of all that God has wrought. Let me rather put it in Ambrose's own words at the end of the first stanza of *Aeterne rerum conditor*: *ut alleues fastidium*. Fontaine interprets this verse as a reference to man's daily plight and his need of rest. I am convinced that the phrase denotes something far more fundamental: time is not a negative aspect of the world, on the contrary it thwarts all negativity, by opening the possibility of change and variety as an indispensable tool to remain truly alive. The periods of the year, the holy feasts, and indeed the various moments of every day have their own character and can each contribute to human wellbeing. In hymn 1 it is the cock calling forth the very first light, the coming of which changes all things for the better, for instance Peter's repentance, which, of course, took place when the cock had crowed. This is not a coincidence, offering unexpected opportunities for developing pious thoughts, but a structurally placed event.

Although the character and pattern of the second hymn differ considerably from those of the first, the view of time is essentially the same. Its first stanza has a strong doctrinal flavour in a Nicean sense:

> *Splendor paternae gloriae,*
> *de luce lucem proferens,*
> *lux lucis et fons luminis,*
> *dies dierum illuminans.*

The first verse is a clear allusion to Hebr. 1.3 ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτου, "the radiance of God's glory, the stamp of God's very being", but like the rest of this early morning hymn it can only be understood as a continuous reference to sunrise. This moment calls for a prayer that the faithful will prove to be able to live through the day which has just begun in a responsible way. The seventh stanza explicitly links the various parts of the day with specific virtues:

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[53] See for another striking instance of the contrast between prose and poetry my 'Vetusta saecla uidimus. Ambrose's Hymn on Gervasius and Protasius', in: G.J.M. Bartelink, A. Hilhorst, C.H. Kneepkens (eds), *Eulogia. Mélanges offerts à A.A.R. Bastiaensen* (= Instrumenta Patristica 24), Steenbrugge 1991, 65–75, especially 73.

Laetus dies hic transeat!
Pudor sit ut diluculum,
fides velut meridies,
crepusculum mens nesciat!

May gladness be our part throughout the day,
Our modesty like daybreak,
Our faith like noon,
May twilight be unknown to our mind.

The various phases of the day illustrate particular Christian virtues. Time is not an automatic mechanism, but a functional part of creation.

The conclusion can be brief. Producing truly poetical Christian hymns required technical literary skill and a lyrical perception of the created world. Ambrose's classical education had taught him the first of these and his talent for the second was further inspired and deepened by his view of creation as a source of delight and imagination, which could also be explored for literary objectives. Rhetoric and poetry had to provide delight in order to be efficient. The biblical psalms had clearly demonstrated this and the hymnode profits from this experience by following in the tracks of the psalmist. Therefore Christian lyrical poetry proved to be an eminently viable experiment.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND POETICAL EXEGESIS: THE GLASS LAMP IN PRUDENTIUS' *CATHEMERINON* 5[1]

J. Clarke

The inventor of the glowing light (*inventor rutili luminis*) is hailed at the very outset of Prudentius *Cathemerinon* 5. That the word *inventor* has a special significance in this hymn becomes evident as it unfolds, for within it Prudentius uses an innovation in material culture (an *invention*) as the basis of a poetical exegesis. This article demonstrates how he does this, exploring the ways in which Prudentius employs imagery of light, fire and water / liquid in *Cathemerinon* 5. It argues that these have their origin in his celebration of the glass lamp, a newly introduced piece of technology in Prudentius' day.

Christianity adopted light as a symbol very early on in its poetry, due to its importance in both the New and Old Testaments and dualistic movements such as Marcionism and Gnosticism.[2] As Assendelft has observed, in Prudentius' morning and evening hymns light takes on profound symbolic importance and she charts the use of imagery of light and the balance between light and dark in hymns such as *Cathe-*

[1] I am grateful for the many helpful suggestions made by participants at the conference, some of which I incorporated into the article. My especial thanks to Professor Haijo Westra (Calgary) who read and commented upon preliminary drafts of the essay, assisted me with much of the German and Dutch scholarship and suggested the dual meaning of the word *inventor*. My thanks also to Dr Margaret O'Hea (Adelaide) for allowing me to quote from her conference paper (*Ex Oriente Lux*) on the invention of the glass lamp. All quotations from Prudentius are taken from Thomson's 1949 edition (Cambridge, Mass.).

[2] R. Herzog, *Die allegorische Dichtkunst des Prudentius*, Munich 1966, 68; M. Assendelft, *Sol Ecce Surgit Igneus; A Commentary on the Morning and Evening Hymns of Prudentius*, Groningen 1976, 29–33. Ambrosius, among the first writers of Christian hymns, begins one by addressing *splendor paternae gloriae, / de luce lucem proferens, / lux lucis et fons luminis, / diem dies inluminans*; see further F.J.E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages* 2nd ed., Oxford 1953, 35, and generally Den Boeft in this volume. Herzog (ibid. 69) also cites Cyprian who a century earlier in his treatise on the *pater noster* calls upon Christ the true sun to make an appearance when the natural sun is setting (*De orat. dom.* 35).

merinon 2.[3] *Cathemerinon* 5, the hymn to the lighting of the lamp, enables Prudentius to devise further dimensions to this imagery. It is understandable how the powerful visual impact of the new glass lamp would appeal to a poet in search of new forms of exegesis[4] and Prudentius' picture of it, occurring towards the close of the hymn, is one of the first detailed descriptions that we possess from antiquity.[5]

When we examine his description in stanza 36 we can see that the emphasis is on light (*lumina*, *lucem*), fire (*flamma*) and liquid (*languidulis natatibus*) which was oil or a mixture of both water and oil. It is significant that the stanza concludes on the word *vitro* that is modified by the adjective *perspicuo* (*lucem perspicuo flamma iacit vitro*, 144). This is the only time in the whole of his poetry that Prudentius employs the noun for glass, a word that in its adjectival form was often applied to water.[6] It is the symbolic implications of the glass lamp, uniting the elements of light, fire and liquid within it, that enables Prudentius to play with these concepts throughout the hymn, culminating in this description.

As Toohey has observed, *Cathemerinon* 5, like many other hymns of Prudentius, has a concentric or 'ring' structure with stanzas of invocation and stanzas about the significance of lighting the lamps surrounding biblical narratives in which there are scenes from both the Old and New Testaments.[7]

Ring composition was a favourite device among classical poets who employed repetition of themes and *topoi* to create concentric patterning.

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[3] Assendelft (n. 2), 23–24.

[4] "No metal or ceramic lamps of the earlier period, suspended from their rods, could match the symbolic and real effect of translucent hanging glass lamps." M. O'Hea, '*Ex Oriente Lux*: Lighting in the Romano-Byzantine World', Paper delivered at the Eight International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan, Sydney 2001, 5.

[5] M.L. Trowbridge, *Philological Studies in Ancient Glass*, Urbana 1928, 190.

[6] Nowhere else does Prudentius employ the term *vitrum*. There is one instance of the Greek word for glass *hyalus* at *Per.* 12.53–54 (*tum camiros hyalo insigni varie cucurrit arcus: / sic prata vernis floribus renident.*) but it is doubtful as to whether this is a reference to actual glass, as most other instances of the substantive refer to a glass-green colour; see further Trowbridge (n. 5) 57. See also Trowbridge, ibid. 69 for an extensive list of references for *vitreus* applied to water in Latin literature; he comments "In the description of water *vitreus* is applied to almost every amount, from the dew drop to the vast ocean."

[7] P. Toohey, 'Concentric Patterning in some Poems of Prudentius' '*Liber Cathemerinon*', *Latomus* 52 (1993) 144. His divisions are as follows: stanzas 1–3: invocation; stanzas 4–7: occasion and significance; stanzas 8–34: biblical narrative (stanzas 8–26 OT, material benefits, stanzas 27–34 NT, spiritual benefits); stanzas 35–37: occasion and significance; stanzas 38–41: final prayer. His divisions and headings will be employed when the hymn's imagery is discussed in the body of this article.

When the elements reappear, however, they do not always do so in the same way; there is an evolution of ideas with the progress of the poem.[8] That Prudentius makes use of a similar device in *Cathemerinon* 5 can be seen by examining some themes of stanzas 1–7 that are echoed in stanzas 35–41.

stanzas 1–7	*stanzas* 35–41
address to creator *of* light (stanza1)	ultimate form of lighting: glass lamp (stanza 36)
heaven compared to lamps (stanza 2)	lamps compared to heaven (stanza 37)
various forms of lighting (stanzas 4–6)	address to creator *as* light (stanza 39)

There is not only a reversal but also an evolution of themes within these stanzas: in stanza 2, for instance, heaven (or more correctly the moon) is compared to a lamp while in stanza 37 it is lamps that are compared to heaven. A similar development of motifs can be observed in the remainder of the hymn. Prudentius is particularly creative in his treatment of the motif of liquid, employing not only water and oil but also substances such as honey, tears and blood. His introduction of the concept of blood and his use of imagery of fire enables him to utilize words for red and purple which will also be examined as part of the imagery. As we explore this imagery within the structure of the hymn we will see how a tension is established between earthly and supernatural that is finally resolved as the images are transformed from negative into positive.[9] Indeed with the resolution between earthly and

[8] For instances of ring composition see G. Williams, *The Third Book of Horace's Odes*, Oxford 1969, 22, D.A. Traill, 'Catullus 63; Rings around the Sun', *CPH* 76 (1979) 211–214. For an instance of evolution of images and *topoi* within a ring structure see J.R. Clarke, 'Colours in Conflict; Catullus' Use of Colour Imagery in *C.* 63', *CQ* 51 (2001) 163–177.

[9] This tension between earthly and supernatural is characteristic of Christian poetry; Christians rejected the world of the senses but needed to make use of it to describe what was beyond human experience: see H.R. Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, Minneapolis 1982, 70. There is a controversy among scholars, discussed by A.A.R. Bastiaensen, 'Prudentius in Recent Literary Criticism', in: J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (eds.), *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, Leiden 1993, 101–134, esp. 129–131, as to whether nature is employed merely as a form of allegory for the divine (e.g. Herzog n. 2) or because of a fundamental kinship with it (e.g. C. Gnilka, 'Die Natursymbolik in den Tagesliedern des Prudentius' in: E. Dassman / K. Suso Frank (eds), *Pietas. Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting*, Münster 1980, 411–446). There is not room within the scope of this article for a detailed discussion of the issues but I would venture to suggest that by the end of *Cathemerinon* 5 there seems to emerge a fundamental kinship (indeed almost a fusion) between the material and divine worlds.

supernatural at the end of the hymn, the glass lamp and its associated imagery seem to bring heaven down upon earth and manifest God to the eyes of his worshippers.

Stanzas 1–7 Invocation / Occasion and Significance

As we have already observed, Prudentius begins the hymn with an address to the inventor of the glowing light:

> *Inventor rutili, dux bone, luminis*
> *qui certis vicibus tempora dividis,*
> *merso sole chaos ingruit horridum.*
> *lucem redde tuis, Christe, fidelibus.* (*vv.* 1–4)

The word *inventor* is a very interesting choice for the opening of this hymn. Assendelft comments that the term implies not only "he who discovers" but "he who makes"[10] and although ostensibly the *inventor* is Christ, the word may also be employed for creation on another level, as a subtle tribute to the inventor or invention of the glass lamp. The main opposition established in this first stanza is between light (*luminis, lucem*) and a darkness (*merso sole, chaos*) that is depicted in entirely negative terms. Prudentius calls upon God to restore light to a world beset by *horridum chaos*, a phrase that is employed by Valerius Flaccus to describe the underworld.[11] Otherwise the stanza has primarily Horatian antecedents; the language and imagery is a deliberate echo of Horace's description of the return of Augustus in *C.* 4.5 who is also called *dux bone* and asked to *redde lucem tuae patriae* 'bring the light back to your country' just as Christ is asked to *lucem redde tuis fidelibus* 'bring the light back to your faithful'.[12] What commentators have not observed is the

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[10] "In H 159–160 P. links *inventor* with the verb *creare*." Assendelft (n. 2), 127. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1968, s.v. lists the second meaning of *inventor* as an 'inventor, discoverer'. See also C.W. Mönnich, 'Verlossende Techniek; Prudentius Cathemerinon 5,1–28', *Meded. der Kon. Ned. Akad. van Wetensch. afd. Letterk. N.S.* 34 (1971) 11, 24.

[11] *Iunonem volucri primam suspendit Olympo / horrendum chaos ostendens poenasque barathri* (2.85–86). As W. Evenepoel, 'Die fünfte Hymne des Liber Cathemerinon des Aurelius Prudentius Clemens', *WS* 12 (1978) 235–236 observes, although the phrase might appear somewhat excessive at first, it is not when one takes into account the specific context of hymn 5 where the battle between light and dark is highlighted.

[12] *Divis orte bonis, optime Romulae / custos gentis, abes iam nimium diu; / maturum reditum pollicitus patrum / sancto concilio redi. / lucem redde tuae dux bone, patriae* (*vv.* 1–5). Assendelft (n. 2, 126–127) quite correctly observes that Prudentius gives his stanza a different emphasis; whereas Augustus's return is related to the light of the sun, Christ is asked

significance of the colour adjective *rutilus* that does not occur in the Horace passage and that Prudentius places as the second word of the poem. This is a word that could be employed of fire, daylight and the moon but it also had a strong connection with blood.[13] By using this colour term Prudentius prepares the reader not only for the occurrence of red and purple colour words throughout the poem but also hints at the imagery of fire and blood to come. In the first instance *rutilus* finds its echo in the third stanza where souls are referred to as *igniculi* 'little fires' (*v.* 12).

Prudentius then proceeds to contrast heaven's lights with lights on earth:

> *quamvis innumero sidere regiam*
> *lunarique polum lampade pinxeris,*
> *incussu silicis lumina nos tamen*
> *monstras saxigeno semine quaerere*
>
> *ne nesciret homo spem sibi luminis*
> *in Christi solido corpore conditam,*
> *qui dici stabilem se voluit petram,*
> *nostris igniculis unde genus venit.* (*vv.* 5–12)

A tension between supernatural and earthly is established here that will not be resolved until the end of the hymn. The concept of the lamp (*lampas*) occurs for the first time but it is applied to the moon rather than any man-made light. Heaven is depicted as a palace (*regia*) on whose ceiling the stars are painted and from which the lamp of the moon is suspended. The suggestion is that the puny, artificial lights on earth cannot measure up to those in heaven. This is established by the concessive clause *quamvis…tamen* and reinforced by the contrast between the countless stars (*innumero sidere*) and the spark (*semine*) from which lights on earth originate. The element of fire is introduced in the third stanza and linked with the human soul. As Assendelft observes,

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to bring back a light greater than the sun, relating it to Christ's second coming. Prudentius' development of the Horatian passage is thus a form of 'contrast imitation' (Bastiaensen, n. 9, 123), which also occurs at *v.* 132 where it is made more obvious by Christ being called *maior sole.*

[13] Assendelft: "the adj. rutilus refers to the ruddy quality of the flaming light but also to the glow of natural light"; she cites *Aen.* 8.430, *Arat.* 871 and *Iuvenc.* 2.168 (n. 2, 127). J. André comments "Ils qualifient des objets d'un rouge vif, comme le sang (Ov., *Met.* V, 83; Luc. I, 615; Sil. It. I,447; IV, 250)…La saturation de la teinte en est l'élément dominant, comme le sang en est le type le plus représentatif", in: *Étude sur les Termes de Couleur dans la Langue Latine*, Paris 1949, 85.

the diminutive *igniculi* has the effect of showing the smallness of each individual spark;[14] once again, this is in contrast with the majesty of heaven. Thus by the end of the third stanza we have descended from heaven and divine to earthly and human. This leads naturally on to a description of the various forms of lighting that were already employed in Prudentius' day:

> *pinguis quos olei rore madentibus*
> *lychnis aut facibus pascimus aridis,*
> *quin et fila favis scirpea floreis*
> *presso melle prius conlita fingimus*
>
> *vivax flamma viget, seu cava testula*
> *sucum linteolo suggerit ebrio,*
> *seu pinus piceam fert alimoniam,*
> *seu ceram teretem stuppa calens bibit.*
>
> *nectar de liquido vertice fervidum*
> *guttatim lacrimis stillat olentibus,*
> *ambustam quoniam vis facit ignea*
> *imbrem de madido flere cacumine* (*vv.* 13–24)

Significantly there is no mention of glass here. Instead, in an elaborate description, Prudentius summarizes all the other forms of lighting that were available in the late fourth century, including rush tapers, earthenware lamps and torches.[15] These forms of lighting not only fail to match the lights in heaven, they cannot rival the splendours of the glass lamp described at the climax to the hymn. But it is in these three stanzas that Prudentius first introduces imagery of liquid in conjunction with fire that will play such an important role in the hymn. The stanzas are full of words that suggest liquid or drinking: *olei…rore…madentibus …melle…sucum…ebrio…bibit…nectar… liquido… guttatim … lacrimis stillat … imbrem madido flere.* These are matched by a number of words that

[14] Assendelft (n. 2), 132. Gnilka, however, (n. 9, 420–421) rejects the metaphorical interpretation of *igniculi* as 'souls', taking the word merely as the antecedent of the extended relative clause on the various forms of lighting that Christ has given to the world (*vv.* 13–24) which he also thinks should be interpreted literally rather than metaphorically. He does, on the other hand, acknowledge that there is a deep and substantial analogy between God and fires (424) and elsewhere in his poetry Prudentius uses words associated with light and fire to describe human souls (e.g. *Per.* 10.439–440); given these associations it seems quite likely that *igniculi* is meant to be interpreted on a metaphorical level as a reference to human souls which, after all, were made in God's image.

[15] Herzog (n. 2, 71) comments that this is the most detailed description that we possess from antiquity.

suggest flame or warmth: *lychnis …facibus… flamma… fervidum… ambustum… ignea.* At several points Prudentius unites these concepts with the almost oxymoronic *nectar fervidum* 'hot nectar', *ambustum imbrem* 'burning shower'. The motif of boiling liquid will recur later in the hymn in both the OT and NT biblical narratives.

Prudentius then rounds off this section of the hymn by returning to the opposition between light and dark with which the hymn began:[16]

> *splendent ergo tuis muneribus, Pater,*
> *flammis nobilibus scilicet atria,*
> *absentemque diem lux agit aemula,*
> *quam nox cum lacero victa fugit peplo.* (*vv.* 25–28)

In *v.* 27 natural and artificial light are juxtaposed with *diem* and *lux* placed together at the centre of the verse. The lighting that Prudentius has described in the previous three stanzas helps to bring the day back but the emphasis is on the concept of a struggle with the light described as *aemula* and the night as *victa.* Light and dark vie with each other for mastery and violence is implied by the image of night fleeing with torn cloak (*lacero peplo*).[17] This prepares the reader for the biblical narrative that forms the main part of the following section: the potential conflict between the bloodthirsty Egyptian army and the Israelites.

Stanzas 8–26 OT: Material benefits

With *sed* in stanza 8 the hymn veers to a series of biblical narratives, the first of which is the story of Moses and the burning bush. Prudentius firstly reiterates the concept expressed at the beginning of the hymn: that light comes from god:

> *sed quis non rapidi luminis arduam*
> *manantemque Deo cernat originem?*
> *Moses nempe Deum spinifero in rubo*
> *vidit conspicuo lumine flammeum* (*vv.* 29–32)

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[16] Evenepoel: "Dieser Vers [28] ist das Gegenstück zu dem, was in der Anfangsstrophe mit *merso sole chaos ingruit horridum* zum Ausdruck gebracht wird, und auf diese Art wird die Einleitung des Gedichtes harmonisch abgerundet." (n. 11, 236).

[17] As Evenepoel (n. 11, 236) observes, words and phrases such as *nox victa*, *fugit*, *aemula* and *peplo* are traditional in regard to night and day (he supplies a list of references in notes 17 and 18) but are given new life here by a deeper significance. Assendelft (n. 2, 141) comments that *lacerus* is used of torn clothing in Stat. *Theb.* 5.254 with implications of total defeat which are prevalent here.

With the word *arduam* in *v.* 29 Prudentius brings the reader back to the heavenly sphere and divine light.[18] The concept of liquid is suggested in this stanza with the use of the word *manantem*, literally 'flowing' or 'running' that is often used of fluids.[19] Flame (*flammeum*) makes its appearance with the final word and so in this stanza we have the three elements of light (*lumine*), liquid (*manantem*) and flame. The emphasis is very much on the visual with *cernat* in *v.* 30, reinforced by *vidit* in *v.* 32. The flame of the burning bush makes God manifest just he will be manifested later in the light of the lamp.[20] The adjective *conspicuus* is used of the light; this will be echoed at a later point in the hymn by *perspicuo* (*v.* 144) that is used of the glass of the lamp.

The idea of God manifested in flame is picked up in stanzas 10 and 11 with the description of the column of flame that the Israelites followed in the desert:

> *hunc ignem populus sanguinis inclyti,*
> *maiorum meritis tutus et inpotens,*
> *suetus sub dominis vivere barabaris,*
> *iam liber sequitur longa per avia.*
> .....
> *plebem pervigilem fulgure praevio*
> *ducebat radius sole micantior.* (*vv.* 37–40, 43–44)

For the first time the word for blood occurs (*v.* 37). Significantly this is associated with a word for fire (*ignem*), reinforcing the concept of redness and continuing the motif of hot or boiling liquid. Here employed of the ancestry of the Israelites, the image of blood will recur with more sinister overtones in subsequent stanzas. The tension between natural / earthly and supernatural reappears with Prudentius' description of the ray as *brighter* than the sun (*v.* 44).

With a second *sed* in stanza 12 Prudentius introduces the opposition: the king of Egypt who is linked with the waters of the Nile:

> *sed rex Niliaci litoris invido*
> *fervens felle iubet praevalidam manum* (*vv.* 45–46)

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[18] "Arduus is used frequently by P. in the sense of 'lofty', 'heavenly'." comments Assendelft (n. 2), 142.

[19] See def. 1 "(of liquids, etc.) to flow, pour, run" of *manare* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (n. 10, s.v.).

[20] Manifest i.e. "readily perceived by the eye or understanding", according to the *Random House Dictionary*, New York 1967, s.v. def. 1.

Although the adjective *fervens* is applied to the king rather than the Nile there is a sense in which he is being associated with seething or boiling water, an implication which is reinforced by the word *fel* which literally means 'poisonous liquid' or 'bile'.[21] This is matched by the description of the Israelites in stanza 15 who have been burnt by this water:

> *hic iam servitii nescia pristine*
> *gens Pelusiacis usta vaporibus* (*vv.* 57–58)

Pelusium was a city on the Eastern mouth of the Nile while *vapor* literally means 'steam' and is juxtaposed with the participle *usta* which suggests the heat and scorching properties of flame. The water motif is then continued in the very same stanza with the description of the Red Sea by which the Israelites halt:

> *tandem purpurei gurgitis hospita*
> *rubis litoribus fessa resederat.* (*vv.* 59–60)

Prudentius follows classical poets in playing upon the chromatic significance of the name.[22] The adjective *purpureus* is also suggestive of blood and death, recalling Horatian phrases such as *…mare / Poeno purpureum sanguine* (*C.* 2.12.2–3)[23] while the word *gurges* 'whirlpool' implies seething or churning and is used again in *v.* 76 when the water rolls back upon the Egyptian army. The seething purple of the waves presages the violence to come but this violence will not be visited on the Israelites. On the contrary, when they pass through the sea the waves become still and *glassy*:

> *praebent rupta locum stagna viantibus,*
> *riparum in faciem pervia sistitur*
> *circumstans vitreis unda liquoribus*
> *dum plebs sub bifido permeat aequore* (*vv.* 65–68)

Here, at what Assendelft identifies as the core of the hymn,[24] is the first time that Prudentius introduces the concept of glass. Herzog comments that the *transitus maris rubri* was the great salvation event of the Old Testament and thus the transformation of the water at this point

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[21] See the definitions under 1 in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*: (n. 10, s.v.).

[22] For instance, Tib. 2.2.16, Mart. 7.30.3–4.

[23] For the association of purple with blood and death in Greek and Latin poetry see J.R. Clarke, *Imagery of Colour and Shining in Catullus, Propertius and Horace*, New York 2003, 132. Assendelft relates the blood to the symbolic death of baptism (n. 2, 154).

[24] Assendelft (n. 2), 155.

is entirely appropriate, underlining the significance of the moment.[25] The adjective *vitreus* in this context implies that the water's power to harm has been taken away for the allusion to glass reinforces the idea of stillness present in *stagna*, *sistitur* and *circumstans* as well as suggesting transparency and brilliance.[26] But glass also carries with it an implication of fragility,[27] an implication that will be fulfilled once the Israelites have made their crossing. Upon the Egyptians, associated as they are with blood and violence (*Hebraeum sitiens fundere sanguinem*, 71) the full destructive powers of the purple water will be visited (*vv.* 73–76).

Prudentius then concludes this section of the hymn by elaborating upon the idea of Christ taking away water's power to harm (*vv.* 85–104).[28] He gives a series of *exempla* that begin with Christ quelling the sea (*vv.* 85–88) and end with a positive instance of water's power to nurture: a rainy wind that delivers birds as food (*vv.* 101–104). Of particular significance are his descriptions of streams in the desert that give drink to the multitudes who thirst under the burning sky (*…quae sitientibus / dat potum populis axe sub igneo*, 91–92) and his depiction of manna falling like snow and dropping more thickly than chilly hail (*inplet castra cibus tunc quoque ninguidus, / inlabens gelida grandine densius*, 97–98). In the story of the Egyptians and Israelites water was associated with words such as *fervens, gurges* and words for red and purple; in these lines it has been transformed into a force that has the ability to counter fire and heat and is linked with the ideas of whiteness (*ninguidus*) and coldness (*gelida*). As the adjective *vitreus* can be employed of ice and frost in both classical and late Latin poetry,[29] there may also be a foreshadowing of the glass lamp here, for in its frozen, crystalline form water most resembles glass.

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[25] "Jeder Christ seiner Zeit wußte, daß dieser Durchzug die Errettung aus der Welt und der Sieg über Pharao den Sieg über den in der Welt herrschenden Teufel bedeutete.", comments Herzog (n. 2), 74. Prudentius does employ the adjective *vitreus* elsewhere of water (*Per.* 7.16, *Ti.* 54, *C.* 8.47) but here the adjective takes on a special significance because of the climactic description of the glass lamp. Assendelft (n. 2, 157) observes that Prudentius uses *vitreus* of water in a baptismal context at *Per.* 12.39 that again is appropriate for the idea of transformation.

[26] Trowbridge (n. 5), 65.

[27] Ibid., 73–74.

[28] Not all the *exempla* are directly related to water but most have some connection with it, for instance the manna of *vv.* 97–100 is compared to snow and hail. The reference to wood in *vv.* 95–96 is an exception.

[29] Trowbridge (n. 5), 72.

Stanzas 27–34 NT: Spiritual Benefits

The second series of biblical narratives deal with the concepts of heaven (*vv.* 113–124) and hell (*vv.* 125–136). Three stanzas are devoted to each with an introductory stanza (*vv.* 109–112) in which Prudentius continues the water imagery by employing the metaphor of stormy seas to depict the soul's journey through life and beyond death.

In Prudentius' picture of heaven, water has become the force that nurtures all its lushness, fragrance and colour:[30]

> *illic purpureis tecta rosariis*
> *omnis fragrat humus caltaque pinguia*
> *et molles violas et tenues crocos*
> *fundit fonticulis uda fugacibus* (*vv.* 113–116)

In this first stanza there is a word for fragrance (*fragrat*), five words associated with colour (*purpureis*, *rosariis*, *calta*, *violas*, *crocos*) and four words associated with liquid (*fundit fonticulis uda fugacibus*). There is a cumulation of words for liquid in the final line and the verb *fundit* governs the previous one and a half lines, creating the impression that it is the water that pours forth the flowers. In a similar fashion in the stanza that follows there are a great many water words associated with the exotic plants and spices described.[31] The colours of the flowers in the first stanza (roses, marigolds, violets and crocuses) are purples, yellows and oranges. Such hues recall blood and fire, but in heaven their force has been neutralized and they are now linked with words that are suggestive of gentleness and luxury (*pinguia … molles …tenues*). The adjective *purpureus* recurs, no longer in conjunction with the ominous water of the Red Sea but now transferred to roses that were employed in Christian literature and iconography to signify resurrection and eternal life.[32] Evenepoel points out that Prudentius' description of heaven begins with the colour adjective *purpureis* and concludes with

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[30] The classical antecedents of Prudentius' description of heaven or paradise have been well treated in other scholarship and need not concern us here. See P. Fontaine, 'Trois Variations de Prudence sur le Thème du Paradis' in: W. Wimmel (ed.), *Forschungen zur römischen Literatur; Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Karl Büchner*, Wiesbaden 1970, 96–115, esp. 102–109.

[31] *illic et gracili balsama surculo / desudata fluunt, raraque cinnama / spirant, et folium, fonte quod abdito / praelambens fluvius portat in exitum.* (*vv.* 117–120). *Desudata, fluunt, fonte, praelambens* and *fluvius* all have some connection with water.

[32] Assendelft (n. 2), 175.

another colour word, *candidis*. Significantly this final colour word is applied to the feet of the blessed:

> *hymnorum modulis dulce canunt melos*
> *calcant et pedibus lilia candidis* (*vv.* 123–124)

Evenepoel makes the interesting observation that this image would come as a surprise to the reader who would normally expect the adjective *candidus* to agree with *lilia*; his view receives support from *Aeneid* 6.708–709 where Virgil describes the *candida lilia* in the fields of Elysium.[33] *Candidus* in this context, as Fontaine has observed, not only has reference to the physical beauty and perfection of the blessed but also suggests the light of transfiguration.[34] It is often employed by classical poets to denote a white with a high degree of lustre or sheen; the cognate verb *candeo* is the word from which candle was ultimately derived while the word *candela* in Prudentius' day may have been applied to glass lamps.[35] The blessed souls, who at the beginning of the poem were referred to as *igniculi* have in heaven become the source of light.

Prudentius then makes the transition to a hell that has lost its power, at least for a day. He describes the guilty souls' respite from punishment on Easter night when Christ returns to the world of men:

> *non sicut tenebras de face fulgida*
> *surgens Oceano Lucifer inbuit,*
> *sed terris Domini de cruce tristibus*
> *maior sole novum restituens diem.* (*vv.* 129–132)

The first simile skilfully blends imagery of light and water, particularly in the final three words where we have an alternation of water (*Oceano*),

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[33] Evenepoel (n. 11), 243. Compare also Prop. 1.20.37–38. The word can, of course be used of feet: cf. Hor. *C.* 4.1.27 where the word is applied to the feet of youths dancing at the temple of Venus.

[34] Fontaine (n. 30),109.

[35] For instances of *candidus* used of white with a high degree of lustre see Cat. 68.70–71, 68.134, Hor. *C.* 3.15.6. As the two Catullus examples demonstrate, it is often associated with words for shining. Before Prudentius' time a word *candela* existed derived from *candeo* + *ela* (Oxford Latin Dictionary, n. 10, s.v.) that was initially used to denote a simple rush-light (e.g. Plin. *N.H.* 16.178, Juv. 3.287). It is a matter of debate as to when candles as we understand them were invented but O'Hea states that by the third century wax candles were associated with the dead and left as grave goods (n. 4, 4). In the 380s Egeria describes *candelae vitreae* hanging in the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre (24.7). O'Hea suggests that this is a reference to oil-wicked glass lamps; indeed she speculates that the use of glass candle holders in pagan funeral and ritual contexts may have provided the impetus for the use of glass for oil lamps (ibid.).

light (*lucifer*) and water (*inbuit*). The tension between supernatural and earthly makes another appearance here with the natural world considered an inadequate comparison for the divine.[36]

Prudentius' description of the forces of Hell abating concludes with a picture of the damned freed from flames and the rivers of sulphur ceasing to boil:

> *functorum populus liber ab ignibus*
> *nec fervent solito flumina sulphure* (*vv.* 135–136)

The liberation of the *functorum populus* from flames is a development of *vv.* 91–92 where god sends water to give relief to the *populi* who thirst under the blazing (*igneo*) sky. The image of boiling liquid echoes those at the beginning of the hymn (*nectar fervidum* 21, *ambustum imbrem* 23–24) and the picture of the king of the Nile seething with bile (*fervens felle*, 46). The concept of water losing its force to harm recalls the episode of the crossing of the Red Sea at the core of the hymn. Once again the destructive powers of fire and boiling or seething (*fervent*) water have been neutralized, this time in Hell itself.

Stanzas 35–41: Occasion and Significance / Final Prayer

After a transition stanza (*vv.* 137–140) that brings the reader back to the earthly realm by depicting the congregation's vigil on Easter night, the poem reaches its climax with the description of the glass lamps in which all the previous imagery is encapsulated and the elements of light, fire and liquid finally unite in harmony:

> *pendent mobilibus lumina funibus,*
> *quae suffixa micant per laquearia,*
> *et de languidulis fota natatibus*
> *lucem perspicuo flamma iacit vitro.* (*vv.* 141–144)

The choice of words and their order in the stanza reinforce the perception of harmony. There is a balance of words in the first two lines with *pendent…lumina* alternating with *mobilibus…funibus* and *micant* placed between *suffixa… laquaria.* There is no suggestion of conflict or

[36] Verses 129–130 are derived from a famous Virgilian simile (*Aen.* 8.589–591); it is noteworthy that Prudentius rejects this analogy in a form of contrast-imitation. He does this possibly because the Virgilian simile is employed of a mortal (Pallas) but more likely as a way of leading into the next metaphor in which God outshines the sun.

disjunction here between the elements of fire and liquid; instead the flame floats on the liquid and is nourished (*fota*) by it. The final line in the stanza is particularly powerful with each of the words selected and positioned to suggest the effect of the flame through glass: the clear glass (*perspicuo… vitro*) surrounds the flame (*flamma*) and the verb *iacit* is separated from its object *lucem* which creates the impression of the light being cast a long way. The hymn has taken the reader from the various other forms of lighting described at the start by a circuitous route through salvation stories in the Old and New Testaments to this, the ultimate form of lighting.[37] Unlike the lights at the beginning of the poem that were no match for the stars in God's heavenly palace, the glass lamps swaying from the ceiling seem to bring heaven down upon earth:

> *credas stelligeram desuper aream*
> *ornatam geminis stare trionibus*
> *et qua bosphoreum temo regit iugum*
> *passim purpureos spargier hesperos*. (*vv.* 145–148)

The concept of heaven manifested in the glass lamp is reinforced by some interesting word choices. *Micant*, employed in *v.* 142 of the gleam of the lamps, is regularly used of stars[38] and the colour adjective *purpureus*, here applied to the stars (*v.* 148), last appeared in Prudentius' description of heaven (*v.* 113). For the brief time of the lighting of the glass lamps on Easter night, heaven and earth have become one and the tension between earthly and supernatural has disappeared. Consequently the threatening qualities of night established in the first section of the hymn have vanished.[39] There is no longer a struggle between light and dark as there was in *vv.* 27–28; instead the *horridum chaos* of *v.* 3 has been transformed into a dewy night upon which offerings of light can be made to God:

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[37] Evenepoel (n. 11, 246) also makes the point that whereas at the beginning of the poem Prudentius describes different forms of lighting, at the close he narrows it down to one analogy, the *lychni*. He doesn't, however, mention the fact that these are glass lamps. Mönnich discusses how the technology of artificial light brings salvation from darkness in this poem (n. 10, 19) but likewise doesn't make specific reference to glass lamps.

[38] For instance Cat. 61.200, Hor. *C.* 1.12.46–47, Ov. *Met.* 7.100.

[39] "Von der einigermaßen ängstlichen Sphäre, die in der Anfangsstrophe vermittelt wurde, vor allem durch Vers 3 *merso sole chaos ingruit horridum*, ist im froh jubelnden Schlußteil keine Spur mehr übriggeblieben.", comments Evenepoel (n. 11, 247–248).

o res digna, Deus, quam tibi roscidae
noctis principio grex tuus offerat,
lucem, qua tribuis nil pretiosius,
lucem, qua reliqua praemia cernimus. (*vv.* 149–152)

In this stanza the motif of liquid occurs almost for the last time but here it has been transformed into a dew which lends its cool and nourishing properties to the night with which it is associated. Light is no longer a rival (*aemula*) to the night but has become a gift; the light that God has bestowed upon humans is given back to him in the form of the glass lamp. But Prudentius then develops the concept still further. At the start of the hymn God was depicted as the creator of light; at the end he has become the light itself:

tu lux vera oculis, lux quoque sensibus
intus tu speculum, tu speculum foris (*vv.* 153–154)

Note how Prudentius lays emphasis on perception of God by the eyes and the senses[40] and indeed the imagery he has employed throughout this hymn has been designed to appeal to the senses of sight, touch and even taste. Not only is God manifested in this light but he also reflects the light onto humans so that they become a mirror image of himself. This suggests a dual symbolism for the glass lamp. It reflects God's light but it is also a reflection of the human soul; the flame shining through the clear glass is the human being as viewed by God.[41] As human souls were referred to as 'little fires' in the first section of the hymn (*v.* 12) and became the source of light in heaven (*v.* 124), with this idea the circle of imagery is complete.

Inspired by the new technology of the glass lamp Prudentius has devised a very complex and intricate series of images that utilize light, fire, liquid and the colours red and purple. He has placed this imagery within a poem with a concentric structure, enabling him to revisit and

[40] Assendelft says *sensibus* means 'mind' here (n. 2, 192) but it is also the case that the word may have a dual meaning as there has been a strong appeal to the senses throughout the hymn.

[41] Compare Prudentius' description of the nature of the human soul at *Per.* 10.431–440: *ut idolorum respuant caliginem, / cernant ut illud lumen aeternae spei / non suculentis influens obtutibus / nec corporales per fenestras emicans, / puris sed intus quod relucet mentibus. / pupilla carnis crassa crassum perspicit, / et res caduca quod resolvendum est videt: / liquidis videndis aptus est animae liquor; natura fervens sola ferventissimae / divinitatis vim coruscantem capit.* He firstly describes it as a light gleaming within (*intus relucet*), then as a liquid (*animae liquor*) and finally as a heat or fire (*fervens*) which he links with that of the godhead (*ferventissimae divinitatis*). Thus here too the human soul is associated with the elements of light, fire and liquid.

revise the images as the poem progresses. As the images are revisited, they are transformed from negative into positive.[42] The bloody, raging waters of the Red Sea become still and clear as glass, the rivers of hell cease to boil and even horrid chaos is turned into dewy night. This is the effect of having God, heaven and the human soul manifested upon earth in the form of the glass lamp.

[42] It is interesting that this is the opposite of a pattern I have identified for Catullus 63 which has a similar concentric structure but in which the imagery starts out positive and ends up negative (Clarke, n. 8). According to M. Roberts the movement from grief to joy (i.e. negative to positive) is a common one in Christian poetry (*Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs; The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius*, Ann Arbor 1993, 19).

THE *CARMEN AD UXOREM* AND THE GENRE OF THE EPITHALAMIUM

R. Chiappiniello

The 'Carmen ad uxorem' and its Structure

The *Carmen ad uxorem* is a learned poem of 122 lines transmitted by three manuscripts among the texts of Prosper of Aquitaine, a Gallo-Roman writer of the first half of the fifth century AD.[1] Nevertheless, since the *editio princeps* of Friedbergen, published in Mainz in 1494,[2] editors have variously ascribed the *Carmen ad uxorem* either to Prosper or to Paulinus of Nola.[3] In the best and most recent edition of the poem, Hartel included the poem in the appendix of spurious texts attributed to Paulinus of Nola.[4] Nineteenth-century scholars paid only cursory attention to the *Carmen ad uxorem* focusing in their analysis primarily on the debated issue of its authorship. By contrast, twentieth-century scholars re-evaluated the artistic quality of the poem and the remarkable knowl-

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[1] The manuscripts are the *Reginensis latinus* 230 and *Reginensis latinus* 206 (both ninth-century parchments) now held in the Vatican library; *Casinensis* 226 (eleventh-century parchment) held in the monastery of Monte Cassino. I thank Don Faustino and the monks of Monte Cassino who kindly gave me the opportunity to see the original manuscript.

[2] P. Friedbergen, *Epigrammata Sancti Prosperi episcopi Regiensis de vitiis et virtutibus ex dictis Augustini*.

[3] Ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine: B. Stagninus, *Opuscola de Gratia et Libero Arbitrio S. Prosperi Aquitani episcopi Reginensis viri religiosissimi, divi Augustini discipuli, et in divinis Scripturis eruditissimi. Quo libello continentur Epistola S. Prosperi ad Rufinum; Ad excerpta Januensium (quod alii dicunt Genuensium); Liber S. Prosperi contra Cassianum; Epistola Aurelii Carthaginensis episcopi; Caelestini Epistola ad episcopos Galliae; etc., ac S. Prosperi Epigrammata; Ad uxorem poema*, Venice 1538; Gryphius, S., *Opuscula de Gratia et Libero Arbitrio S. Prosperi Aquitani episcopi Regiensis, viri religiosissimi, divi Augustini discipuli et in divinis Scripturis eruditissimi*, Lyon 1539; Muratori, L.A., *S. Pontii Paulini Opera*, Verona 1736 (the *Carmen ad Uxorem* is at pp. 746ff.). Ascribed to Paulinus of Nola: H. Rosweyd, *Divi Paulini Nolani Opera*, Antwerp 1622 (the *Carmen ad Uxorem* was poem 3; this edition has been reprinted in *PL* 61, coll. 737–740); G. Remondini, *Dei Poemi di S. Paolino vescovo di Nola tradotti in italiana favella*, (2 vols), Naples 1751(the *Carmen ad Uxorem* was poem 13).

[4] G. Hartel, *Sanctii Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani carmina*, *CSEL* 30, Leipzig 1894.

edge of pagan and Christian poetry that its author shows.[5] Recently, scholars have focused their attention more on the message of the poem rather than on the issue of authorship.[6] The *Carmen ad uxorem* shows common narrative strategies and many literary similarities with some fifth-century Gallo-Roman poems written in response to the barbarian invasions of the beginning of the fifth century. I agree with the assertion of previous scholars that the *Carmen ad uxorem* is a poem written in Gaul during the first half of the fifth century.

One of the difficulties of interpreting the *Carmen ad uxorem* is that it contains a number of different thematic sections. This peculiarity suggested to Valentin, who produced the first modern study on this poem,[7] that the *Carmen ad uxorem* had been transmitted to us as an amalgamation of two fragments of two distinct poems, written in different metres. I, however, believe that this poem is preserved to us in its original form and that its unity is proved by internal thematic and verbal repetitions. I shall go on to demonstrate how this text exhibits a confluence of pagan and Christian themes, and that the coalescence of its diverse thematic sections can be understood only if we see them contained by the frame of a literary genre. I propose that the genre of the epithalamium is the framework of the *Carmen ad uxorem*. In particular, it will emerge that the presence of the epithalamium of Paulinus of Nola (poem 25) can be detected throughout the thematic structure of our poem, an aspect that has been hitherto unexplored in the scarce secondary literature on the *Carmen*. The text of Paulinus serves as a generative matrix, which the author of the *Carmen ad uxorem* absorbs and transforms. The present paper illustrates how verbal, metrical and thematic choices act in the way of generic identifiers between Paulinus' poem and the *Carmen ad uxorem*, signalling to the reader a further level of interpretation by reading the *Carmen ad uxorem* against Paulinus' poem.

The *Carmen ad uxorem* is divided into two metrical sections: anacreontics for the first 16 lines, and elegiac couplets for the remaining 106 lines (17–122). A husband urges his companion, the addressee of the poem, to emulate his decision and to devote her life to God in order that they may live together in piety and chastity (1–4). The cause of

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[5] Cf. e.g. U. Sesini, *Poesia e musica nella Latinità Cristiana dal III al X secolo*, Turin 1949, 125–127 and J. Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'Occident Chrétien*, Paris 1981, 232–233.

[6] See e.g. M. Roberts, 'Barbarians in Gaul: the response of the poets', in: J. Drinkwater & H. Elton, (eds), *Fifth-century Gaul: a crisis of identity?*, Cambridge 1992, 99–101, esp. 97–106.

[7] L. Valentin, *Prosper d'Aquitaine*, Toulouse 1900, 758ff.

this radical change of lifestyle appears to be a dramatic disturbance of social order (17–22), the madness of war that has caused famine and death (25 ff.) and the fear of persecution (91 ff.). This new life, however, brings new needs: respect for, and practice of, Christian precepts; willingness to attain the virtue of celibacy in marriage (49–59); withdrawal from the ambitions of secular society (67–74), and, emulating the examples of perseverance shown by the martyrs, patience to endure physical pain and displacement (91–97). By way of ring composition, the poem ends with another appeal to the wife to support her companion in their future hardship. In this state of uncertainty, the external discord of the outside world (29 *impia confuso saevit discordia mundo*) is set in contrast to the internal concord of the couple (118 *exemplum vitae simus uterque piae*; 122 *una sit atque duos spiritus unus alat*).

Tradition and transformation of the late antique epithalamium

The *Carmen ad uxorem* belongs to the vast tradition of treatises or poems addressed to women. The revival of this genre during the fourth and fifth centuries yielded texts addressed directly or indirectly to a woman on an unprecedented scale.[8] The subject matter of this poem—that is the devotion of the couple to Christian precepts and their renunciation of worldly matters—can be regarded as an emulation of the growing social phenomena of marital Christian conversion and ascetic detachment. From the fourth century, the rise of monasticism gave impetus to the diffusion of ascetic practice in all classes of the late Roman Empire and this widespread phenomenon left its mark on some families of the Roman aristocratic elite. Over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, due to various social and religious motivations, a considerable number of Roman aristocrats and wealthy landowners devoted their lives to celibacy (or sexual continence in marriage), fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. The example of the conversion of Paulinus of Nola and his

[8] For a thorough understanding of this topic, see the detailed studies of E. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, New York 1986, F.E. Consolino, 'Modelli di comportamento e modi di santificazione per l'aristocrazia femminile d'Occidente', in: A. Giardina, (ed), *Società romana e impero tardoantico*, vol. 1: *Istituzioni, ceti, economia*, Bari 1986, 273–306; G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity. Pagan and Christian Lifestyles*, Oxford 1993; S. Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1994; K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London 1999.

wife, Therasia, was indeed a much-debated topic among fifth-century aristocrats.[9] Paulinus may have provided the model for this new and radical way of living which also entailed a complete rejection of wealth, the sale of all property and strict observance of Christian teaching. The fact that this conversion was a joint venture by husband and wife indicates the growing importance of women in the household of late antiquity and this social phenomenon surely influenced the decision of the author of the *Carmen ad uxorem* to write a poem inspired by the themes of the epithalamium, a genre which celebrates the couple as equals, neither exalting one nor depreciating the other.

In the Greek world, since the time of Homer and Hesiod, the epithalamium (or *hymenaios* in Greek) was a wedding hymn sung either outside the bride's room (the θάλαμος) or during her nuptial procession towards the bridegroom's house.[10] Although the presence of the epithalamium can be traced back to Homeric texts (e.g. *Il.* 18.478ff. esp. 491–496), it is believed that it was first used as a literary form by Alcman and Sappho, which became the main model for Hellenistic authors like Theocritus (*Id.* 18), Callimachus, Eratosthenes.[11] The genre was probably introduced into Latin literature by the neoteric poets (Licinius Calvus, Ticidas, and above all Catullus in poems 61, 62, 64), and reached its mature form in Statius' *Epithalamium in Stellam et Violentillam* (*silv.* 1.2),[12] which served as model for the late antique epithalamia of Claudian, Paulinus of Nola, Sidonius Apollinaris, Ennodius, Luxorius, Dracontius, and Venantius Fortunatus.[13]

However, the epithalamium was not transmitted into late antiquity in a crystallised and rigid form, as the process of adaptation and transformation of its traditional themes had begun long before the late antique

[9] D.E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola. Life, Letters, and Poems*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1999, 261 argues that "from the perspective of the new ascetics of southern Gaul Paulinus was a success".

[10] See R. Muth, '*Hymenaios* und *Epithalamion*', *WS* 67 (1954) 5–45; R. Keydell, 'Epithalamium', *RAC* 5 (1962) 927–943.

[11] See D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, Oxford 1955, 71–72 and 119; Keydell (n. 10) 933f.; J.A. Bouma, *Het Epithalamium van Paulinus van Nola. Carmen XXV met inleiding, vertaling en commentaar*, Assen 1968, 9. On Sappho cf. Serv. *ad* Verg. *Georg.* 3.31 *generum vero pro marito positum multi accipiunt iuxta Sappho, quae in libro qui inscribitur* ἐπιθαλάμια *ait χαῖρε νύμφα χαῖρε, τίμιε γάμβρε πόλλα.*

[12] Cf. A.L. Wheeler, 'Tradition in the *epithalamium*', *AJPh* 51 (1930) 205–223; Z. Pavlovskis, 'Statius and the Late Latin *Epithalamia*', *CPh* 60 (1965) 164–177, esp. 164ff.; S.T. Newmayer, *The* Silvae *of Statius. Structure and Theme*, Leiden 1979, 27.

[13] Cf. C. Morelli, 'L'epitalamio nella tarda poesia latina', *SIFC* 18 (1910) 319–432.

authors. Since its early stages, the genre of the epithalamium had included a conspicuous number of motifs and literary variations sufficient for the poets to adapt their compositions according to the specific circumstances of the moment.[14] In particular, Statius initiated a thorough revolution of the thematic register of this genre by giving to the narration an epic tone,[15] and reducing the discourse on the institution of marriage in favour of longer descriptions of mythological scenes.[16] His foremost innovation is beheld in the fact that the epithalamium is no longer conceived as a hymn to be sung during the wedding ceremony but rather as a 'laudatory poem'[17] delivered to the newly-weds.

Claudian, one of the most interesting poets of late antiquity, influenced by the example of Statius, composed six epithalamia (*carm.* 9–14) on the wedding of the Roman emperor Honorius with Maria, Stilicho's daughter,[18] and the epithalamium on the wedding of two aristocrats, Palladius and Celerina (*carm. min.* 25). Claudian's epithalamia, based on Statius' poems,[19] add two remarkable innovations to this genre. He not only glorifies the couple but also the royal family and, above all, the figure of Stilicho. In doing so, Claudian transforms the wedding poem into an instrument of political propaganda wherein motifs traditionally familiar within the genre of the epithalamium are skilfully adapted into a new context.[20]

Another no less important innovation is the use of new metres in the composition of the epithalamium. We know that until the fifth century

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[14] Cf. D.A. Russel, 'Rhetors at the Wedding', *PCPS* 25 (1979) 104–117, esp. 104–107; Bouma (11n.) 8ff.

[15] See Pavlovskis (12n.) 165: "Statius was not only the founder of the later Latin epithalamium but remained a great force in its development".

[16] See F.E. Consolino, 'Cristianizzare l'epitalamio: il carme 25 di Paolino di Nola', *Cassiodorus* 3 (1997) 199–213, esp. 205.

[17] Pavlovskis (12n.), 164.

[18] See U. Frings, *Claudius Claudianus. Epithalamium de Nuptiis Honorii Augusti, Einleitung und Kommentar*, Meisenheim am Glan 1975, and, most recently, R. Bertini Conidi, *Claudio Claudiano: Fescennini ed epitalamio per le nozze di onorio e Maria. Introduzione, testo, traduzione e note*, Rome 1988.

[19] See Morelli (13n.) 319ff.; Frings (18n.) 4ff. and Pavlovskis (12n.) 166–168.

[20] Cf. Pavlovskis (12n.), 168; Consolino (16n.), 205–206; A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford 1970, 98ff. For instance, Claudian welcomes Maria as the future mother of kings (see *carm.* 10.251–252 *salve sidereae proles augusta Serenae, / magnorum suboles regum parituraque reges*) rather than the more traditional hope of being the future mother of gods (cf. e.g. Stat. *silv.* 1.1.74 *salve, magnorum proles genitorque deorum*). In this case the presence of gods is kept at the margins and used as an indirect eulogy of the addressee, although Claudian's portrait of Maria recalls the description of Venus in Statius *silv.* 1.2.141ff.

wedding poems were generally written in hexameters (if one excludes Catullus' poem 61 composed in elegiac couplets). In contrast, Claudian employed different metres for his wedding poems and, indeed, he was the first Latin poet to have written the prefatory lines of an epithalamium in anacreontics (poem 12).[21] The presence of the anacreontic metre in the corpus of Latin poetry transmitted to us is meagre,[22] however, from the sixth century onwards we know of several instances of wedding poems written in anacreontics. Did Claudian begin a new literary tradition? One can infer with good reason that by using the anacreontics in one of his epithalamia (designed to celebrate a significant event in the Roman Empire, the marriage of the emperor), Claudian became, in his turn, an innovator of the late antique epithalamium and a model for later poets.[23]

Poem 25 of Paulinus, a *Fremdkörper* among pagan epithalamia,[24] marks the first attempt to convert the themes of the classical, pagan wedding poem into Christian ideals.[25] Two of the principal aims of the classical epithalamium, the wish for offspring and the achievement of marital union, are converted in his Christian epithalamium into the celebration of spiritual love, sexual abstinence and chastity. Superficially, Paulinus' poem might seem alien to the themes of the pagan wedding poems, but closer analyses of this first example of a Christian epithalamium have elucidated that the structure of poem 25 shows

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[21] Poem 9 *Prooemium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti* (elegiac couplets); poem 10 *Epithalamium de Nuptiis Honorii Augusti* (hexameters); *Fescennina*: poem 11 (alcaic hendecasyllables); poem 12 (anacreontics); poem 13 (anapaestic dimeters); poem 14 (asclepiads).

[22] See e.g. instances of anacreontics in playful and disengaged texts such as those of Septimius Serenus, fr. 23; Petronius, fr. 20; Ausonius, *Bissula* 4, Luxorius, poem 23. Unusual is the presence of anacreontics in tragedy, cf. e.g. the fourth choral ode in Sen. *Medea*, vv. 849–878.

[23] Byzantine poetry contains several examples of anacreontic applied to the genre of the epithalamium. Cf. e.g. the epithalamia of John of Gaza and Georgios in the sixth century and that of Leo Magister written during the tenth century to celebrate the marriage of the Byzantine emperor, Leo; see T. Bergk, *Poetae Latini Graeci*, Pars III, Leipzig 4th edition (ed. J. Rubenbauer) 1914, 344, fr. 3 and 373–375, fr. 7–8. See also Morelli (13n.) 340, and J.L. Charlet, *Claudius Claudianus: Oeuvres. Poèmes politiques*, (2 vols), Paris 2000, 97–100.

[24] So A. Basson, 'A Transformation of Genres in Late Latin Literature: Classical Literary Tradition and Ascetic Ideals in Paulinus of Nola', in: R.W. Mathisen, & H.S. Sivan (eds), *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Aldershot 1996, 273.

[25] Cf. e.g. Bouma (11n.) 8ff.; Consolino (16n.); A. Basson, 'Tradition and originality in Late Latin literature: classical literary genres in Paulinus of Nola', *Scholia* 8 (1999) 79–95.

a deep familiarity of its author with the themes of pagan wedding poems. Morelli, in one of the first groundbreaking studies on the transformation of generic themes of the ancient epithalamium, pointed out that this poem was structured on a vigorous antithesis between pagan and Christian themes.[26] Others believed that Paulinus had achieved an effective 'Gattungskontrast'[27] between topical themes of the pagan epithalamium and their Christian adaptation. Recently, Consolino has eloquently illustrated that this new literary product is not a mere *Ersatz* of the original pagan meaning with a new Christian message,[28] but the achievement of a new original text in which the pagan framework is adapted by Paulinus to suit his purpose.[29]

Paulinus' poem 25 has been carefully studied and analysed by other scholars and therefore I will draw the reader's attention solely to some generic features of this composition that seem to me relevant to a comparison with the thematic structure of the *Carmen ad uxorem*.

Paulinus opens his poem with an appeal to the newly-weds to live in chastity and harmony in the name of Christ, and converts the exhortation to sexual union into a quest for spiritual love (cf. v. 2 *virgo puer Christi, virgo puella dei*). A few lines later, the substitution of the *nomina luxuriae* of Juno, Cupid and Venus, with the Christian ideals of *pax*, *pudor* and *pietas* (vv. 9–12), makes another direct parallel with the pagan model[30] and, at the same time, subverts its message. Henceforth, Paulinus' epithalamium glorifies chaste marriage to the detriment of two important features of pagan epithalamium: the erotic images of the *pugna amoris* (the lovemaking) and childbearing. The central part of the poem (vv. 27–152) contains the instructions of the poet

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[26] Morelli (13n.) 417, 418 speaks of 'voluta opposizione' and 'sistematica antitesi'. Similarly, Bouma (11n.) 11, 127 who interprets poem 25 as written with a 'ton polémique' and a 'forme antithétique' with the pagan epithalamium; cf. also R.P.H. Green, *The Poetry of Paulinus of Nola. A Study of his Latinity*, Bruxelles 1971, 36: "[in Paulinus' poem] the tone of the classical epithalamium is thus reversed".

[27] R. Herzog, 'Probleme der heidnisch-christlichen Gattungskontinuität am Beispiel des Paulinus von Nola', *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en Occident*, (Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt, 23), Geneva 1977, 373ff., esp. 383; see also Pavlovskis (12n.) 165: "[P.] wrote an unusual epithalamium, in which he sought to contrast Christian and pagan marriage".

[28] *Contra* Bouma (11n.) 127 interprets poem 25 as a *déguisement* of the ancient epithalamium.

[29] See Consolino (16n.) 206ff.

[30] In Stat. *silv.* 1.2.239–240 Juno, Cupid and Venus are guests at the wedding of Stella and Violentilla.

to the couple and, in particular, to the bride; this is clearly another topos of the *allocutio sponsalis* centred on the encomium of the bride. The Christian newly-weds will reject pagan pomposity (in particular, jewels and elaborate clothes) in favour of Christian sobriety and will hold the care for their *mundus interior* in high regard.[31] Furthermore, even the content of this central part is antithetical to the themes of the pagan epithalamium since Paulinus substitutes tales of pagan mythology with the eulogy of biblical women who remained chaste in marriage.[32] One further point worthy of consideration, a telling departure from the literary tradition of the epithalamium, is the replacement of the role of Juno *pronuba* by Jesus *pronubus* who will be present at the wedding ceremony of Julian and Titia, and will be guarantor of their marital harmony.[33]

The anacreontic lines: allusion and 'aemulatio'

The conversion to a Christian-oriented life constitutes the thematic core of the *Carmen ad uxorem*. The introductory anacreontic lines briefly introduce the subject of Christian devotion, the dominant theme of the poem (vv. 1–4):

> *Age iam, precor, mearum*
> *comes inremota rerum,*
> *trepidam brevemque vitam*
> *Domino Deo dicemus.*

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[31] This concept is set in contrast to the topos of the *laus sponsae* and the description of rich ornaments and expensive clothes celebrated in pagan epithalamia; see Morelli (13n.) 418–419; Pavlovskis (12n.) 165; C. Moreschini, 'La donna nell'antica poesia cristiana', in: R. Uglione (ed), *La Donna nel mondo antico. Atti del Convegno Nazionale di Studi*, Turin 1987, 243–264, esp. 260f.; Consolino (16n.) 206.

[32] Among these, Paulinus mentions the examples of Rebecca, Sara and the Virgin Mary; cf. Morelli (13n.) 418; Bouma (11n.) 13; H. Junod-Ammerbauer, 'Le poète chrétien selon Paulin de Nole. L'adaptation des thèmes classiques dans les *Natalicia*', *REAug* 21 (1985) 14–15; M. Roberts, 'The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia from Statius to Venantius Fortunatus', *TAPA* 119 (1989) 331–348, esp. 337–338; Consolino (16n.) 203, 207; Basson (24n.) 84; Trout (9n.) 215–217.

[33] See Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25. 151–152 *tali lege suis nubentibus adstat Iesus / pronubus et vini nectare mutat aquam*; 25.231ff. *imbue, Christe, novos de sancto antistite nuptos / perque manus castas corda pudica iuga, / ut sit in ambobus concordia virginitatis / aut sint ambo sacris semina virginibus*. Cf. also Morelli (13n.) 419; Bouma (11n.) 42, 86; Herzog (26n.) 386; A. Ruggiero, *Paolino di Nola: I carmi. Introduzione, traduzione, note e indici*, Rome 1990, 89–90; Consolino (16n.) 206; Basson (24n.) 88–89.

Come now, I pray, faithful partner of my affairs, our anxious and brief life let us consecrate to the Lord God.[34]

The decision to begin the poem in anacreontics is remarkable given that this metre is hardly ever used in the corpus of Latin poetry that has come down to us.[35] In late antique poetry, the most important employment of this metre occurs in the stanzas[36] of the second *fescenninus* that Claudian composed on the occasion of the wedding of the Roman emperor Honorius in 395 AD (*carm.* 12 [= *fesc.* II]. 1–5):

> *Age, cuncta nuptiali*
> *redimita vere tellus,*
> *celebra toros eriles;*
> *omne nemus cum fluviis, omne canat profundum.*

Come Earth, entirely crowned by the nuptial spring, celebrate the wedding of your master; let every woodland with its rivers, let every depth sing it.

Claudian's second *fescenninus* contains the only example known to us of a text written in anacreontics and beginning with *age*. The metrical and linguistic affinity between the *Carmen ad uxorem* and this poem is, therefore, worthy of consideration.

One may suggest that by beginning his poem with the word *age*, the author of the *Carmen ad uxorem* was signalling to learned readers, who shared his same *Kunstwollen*, that he had chosen the genre of the epithalamium to contain the message of his poem. It is likely that the *fescennini versus* were part of the poetical *langue* of the author of the *Carmen* and that the second *fescenninus*, thanks to it distinctive metrical *variatio*, had a high degree of memorability. The presence of *age* in the *Carmen ad uxorem* might be explained as an example of 'memoria incipitaria',[37] that is, of an emulative technique that could foster further allusions to the genre of the epithalamium. Accordingly, the author of

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[34] Translations of the *Carmen ad uxorem* and Claudian's *fescenninus* are my own, those of Paulinus' poem 25 are taken from P.G. Walsh, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola*, New York 1975.

[35] Cf. F. Crusius, *Römische Metrik*, Munich 1929, 93; Charlet (22n.) 97 ff.

[36] Each stanza of Claud. *carm.* 12 is composed by three anacreontics and a tetrameter coriambic.

[37] I borrow the expression used by G.B. Conte, *Memoria dei poeti e sistema letterario. Catullo, Virgilio, Ovidio, Lucano*, Turin 1974, 10: "specializzazione incipitaria della memoria ritmico-compositiva".

the *Carmen ad uxorem* would have heralded to his readers the adaptation of certain themes of the pagan epithalamium to the Christian message of spiritual marriage. He inserts and amalgamates in the fabric of his text a number of topical motifs familiar to the genre of pagan wedding poems, and adapts them in a hymn, a kind of Christian epithalamium, for the couple's new marital life in the name of God, faithfulness and chastity.

The sixteen anacreontic lines sketch the aim and some of the main features of the poem. This function is particularly clear in Paulinus of Nola's poem 25 where the first 14 lines serve as a programmatic exposition of the main aspects of the Christian wedding and ascetic marriage.[38] Similarly, in the *Carmen ad uxorem*, a husband, who has devoted his life to the Lord, urges his faithful wife to do the same, pointing out that this renewed marriage is the only means of personal safety against a backdrop of rapid decline and dissolution of the world.

Furthermore, these introductory lines reveal the presence of two other topoi. Firstly, they contain a variant of the topos of the appeal. Pagan poets were accustomed to insert into the epithalamium an appeal to Hymen, the god of marriage, who was to perform the ritual *deductio domum* of the bride to the house of the bridegroom (cf. e.g. Catull. 61.44ff.). Already Claudian had added, in his epithalamium to Palladius and Celerina, a variation on this theme by having Hymen appeal to Venus to lead the nuptial procession.[39] Conversely, in the Christian epithalamium of Paulinus, the appeal is directed to Christ to urge him to lead the newly-weds under his bridle. In the latter example, the antithesis is more vividly strengthened by the advice to the Christians to invoke Christ during the wedding parade,[40] a direct comparison with the invocation of Hymen as it is found in pagan epithalamia. It is likely that the readers of the *Carmen ad uxorem*, already alerted by the introductory *age*, would have interpreted, even in the absence of explicit quotations, the appeal of the husband to his wife as a further variation of this topical motif.

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[38] See S. Costanza, 'I generi letterari nell'opera poetica di Paolino di Nola', *Augustinianum* 14 (1974) 637–650, esp. 643: "affermazione programmatica della spiritualità delle nuove nozze cristiane"; cf. also Basson (24n.) 84.

[39] See Claud. *carm. min.* 25.95ff.; see also Basson (24n.) 84f.

[40] Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.34 *Christus ubique pii voce sonet populi.*

Secondly, these initial lines embed in the appeal to the wife the adaptation of another topos of the wedding poems, the *carpe diem* motif (5–8):

> *celeri vides rotatu*
> *rapidos dies meare*
> *fragilisque membra mundi*
> *minui perire labi.*

You see how, in swift rotation, the rapid days pass and the elements of the fragile world diminish, perish, collapse.

In the thematic structure of the classical epithalamium, the appeal serves to urge the bride to leave her home and join the groom.[41] In the *Carmen ad uxorem*, the appeal to the wife takes the form of an exhortation to join her husband in a Christian spiritual union, and in order to give a stronger impulse towards conversion, its author adopts the theme of *carpe diem*.[42] This theme is also found in parenetic texts as an instrument of exhortation either to ascetic life or to Christian conversion.[43] The author of the *Carmen* repositions this topos, a common sentiment in erotic poems, in the new context of Christian conversion; the *carpe diem* motif is not designed to urge the addressee to enjoy the fruit of love but the fruit of Christian spiritual well-being. Among the tableaux of contemporary ruin, this familiar topos of pagan love poetry (making the most of love during the brief time the gods have conceded to human life) is used in the *Carmen ad uxorem* to make more poignant the necessity for the couple to devote their lives to Christ. The genre of the epithalamium allows the poet to adapt the encomium of secular marriage to the ideal of a new spiritual union that must look beyond the fragmentation and the violence of the present life. In his mind, recent

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[41] See e.g. Catul. 61.90ff. *prodeas, nova nupta, si / iam videtur, et audias / nostra verba.* (…) *non tuus levis in mala / deditus vir adultera*; Stat. *silv.* 1.2.182 *ergo age, iunge toros atque otia deme iuventae.*

[42] Cf. e.g. Catul. 61.94 [to the bride] *sed moriaris, abit dies*, 61.199f. [to the bridegroom] … *sed abit dies; / perge, ne remorare*; Stat. *silv.* 1.2.164f. … *veniet iam tristior aetas. / exerce formam et fugientibus utere donis.*

[43] Cf. e.g. Cypr. *Demetr.* 18 *Ille maeret et deflet, sis sibi male sit in saeculo, cui bene non potest esse post saeculum, cuius vivendi fructus omnis hic capitur, cuius hic solatium omne finitur, cuius caduca et brevis vita hic aliquam dulcedinem computat et voluptatem: quando istinc excesserit, poena iam saecula superest ad dolorem*; Eucher. *epist. ad Val.* 135ff. *nobis quoque in praesentiarum brevissimum angustiis coartantibus tempus est, in futuro saecula erunt: competentibus instruamus exiguam, ne provisione perversa impendamus brevi tempore curam maximam et maximo tempori curam brevem.*

events (social turmoil and the frenzy of war that has overwhelmed everyone) are confirmations of the shrinking of the world's vitality, and, ultimately, of its progressive dissolution (cf. vv. 5ff.). The bleak state of the country, torn by wars and discord (see below vv. 25ff.), acts as an analogy to the fragility of human possession. Hence, the husband urges his wife to acknowledge the vacuity of human wealth and the material, perishable aspects of human existence. Devotion to Christ appears to be the only way of overcoming mundane preoccupations and gaining the citizenship of heaven (e.g. v. 73 … *caelum petentes*).

The elegiac couplets: the model of Paulinus of Nola

As illustrated in the previous section, the *Carmen ad uxorem* contains a number of similarities with the genre of the epithalamium. This section will now show that in this poem one can detect 'verbal traces' of Paulinus' poem 25, the archetype of the Christian epithalamium.[44]

After the brief anacreontic section, the poem continues in elegiac couplets, the traditional metre of Latin love poetry. The first group of lines (17–22) begins with an effective description of the fragility of human prosperity and the widespread impoverishment of wealthy citizens. The forceful portrait of the profoundly disturbed and collapsing world reaches its climax in lines 25–30:

ferro peste fame vinclis algore calore,
mille modis miseros mors rapit una homines.
undique bella fremunt, omnes furor excitat armis,
incumbunt reges regibus innumeris.
impia confuso saevit discordia mundo,
Pax abiit terris; ultima quaeque vides.

[44] The epithalamium of Paulinus did not find favour with later Christian poets who preferred the model of Statius and Claudian. In terms of literary reception, the experiment of Paulinus, seen through a 'diachronical' approach, suffered a clear 'defeat'. See Green (25n.) 37: "by challenging classical poetry with his ascetic ideals on its own ground he suffered a significant defeat"; cf. also Consolino (16n.) 208–209. I wonder, however, whether a 'synchronical' approach would be more fruitful. Paulinus had a conspicuous network of friends and notable acquaintances throughout the Roman Empire, like Sulpicius Severus, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, who frequently mentioned him as the exemplary model of Christian convert and writer. The circulation of his texts was wide and one cannot *a priori* exclude that his epithalamium served as model for his contemporary writers who composed poems that no longer survive.

With sword, plague, starvation, chains, cold, heat, in a thousand ways one and the same death snatches wretched humankind. On all sides wars rage, fury stirs up all with weapons, kings swoop down upon countless kings. Unholy discord rages upon a world in turmoil, Peace has left the earth; you see everything in its final stage.

The hyperbole of these lines serves the broader purpose of giving more impulse to the husband's appeal and to set against a dramatic backdrop the urgency of seeing the couple as a harmonious microcosm.[45] These lines also create an important contrast between the *concordia* of the life of the couple, who is committed to lead a pious life, and the impiety of social *discordia*.[46] The appeal of an eternal reward[47] makes the couple willing to tolerate the Christian yoke (45–48):

> *et tamen iste labor sit forte rebellibus asper,*
> *ac rigidas leges effera corda putent;*
> *non autem haec gravis est mansueto sarcina dorso*
> *nec laedit blandum mitia colla iugum.*

And yet this struggle may perhaps be harsh for those who resist, and untamed hearts may think those laws hard; but this burden is not heavy for a docile back and a gentle yoke does not hurt meek necks.

The tone of these verses calls to mind the introductory lines of Paulinus' Christian epithalamium where the newly-weds are compared to a pair of doves yoked to Christ and obeying his reins (25.3–8):

> *Christe Deus, pariles duc ad tua frena columbas*
> *et moderare levi subdita colla iugo.*
> *namque tuum leve, Christe, iugum est, quod prompta voluntas*
> *suscipit et facili fert amor obsequio.*
> *invitis gravis est castae pia sarcina legis*
> *dulce piis onus est vincere carnis opus.*

Christ God, draw these doves in an equal way towards Your reins, and govern their necks thrust beneath Your light yoke; for Your yoke, Christ, is indeed light when assumed by an eager will and borne

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[45] A cursory remark about contemporary events is also found in Paulinus. Consolino (16n.) 211–212 finds that a note of pessimism ("[P.] ritiene prossima la fine dei tempi") lurks in Paulinus' epithalamium at lines 189f. *nubere vel nubi fragilis iam deserit aetas / omnibus aeterno corpore compositis*.

[46] cf. e.g. *carm. ad ux.* 29 *impia … discordia* against *carm. ad ux.* 118 *vitae … piae*; *carm. ad ux.* 30 *Pax abiit terris* against *carm. ad ux.* 56 *pacis amator*.

[47] Cf. *carm. ad ux.* 43 *sed* [scil. *nati in*] *vitam aeternam vita ut mereamur in ista*.

with the ready complaisance of love. This holy burden of the law of chastity is oppressive for the reluctant, but for persons of devotion it is a pleasant burden to keep in subjection the role of the flesh.

The image of the married couple (or lovers) yoked to Venus' chariot and obeying her reins is commonly found in pagan elegy, and in the genre of the epithalamium since Statius.[48] However, the metaphor of *iugum* occurs also in the evangelical light yoke of Christ in *Mt* 11:30 *iugum enim meum suave est, et onus meum leve*. Thus, unsurprisingly, the phrase "the yoke of Christ" frequently occurs in Christian texts either to recall the thorough observance of Christian rules or, reflecting the pagan epithalamium tradition, to remark upon the importance of strong marital bonds between wife and husband.[49] Here Paulinus evokes the erotic connotation of this metaphor and blends it with the allusion to *Mt* 11:30.[50] In doing so, Paulinus spiritualises the erotically charged language of this metaphor (Jesus takes the place of Venus, chastity is favoured to sexuality) and recasts it in the context of the appeal to abjure sex. Conflating the pagan and the biblical tradition, his use of the image of *iugum* in this case means not the submission to the bond of marriage but the submission of the couple to Christian precepts.

In addition, the wording and the general structure of the passage in the *Carmen ad uxorem* recall the epithalamium of Paulinus where the role of the yoke is central to the successful Christian reinterpretation of that poem. Both authors point out that the struggle to respect Christian norms of life[51] is light for those who meekly submit to the Christian

[48] Stat. *silv.* 1.2.78, 1.2.138 f. (…) *Thalami quamvis iuga ferre secundi* [i.e. remarriage] */ saepe neget maerens, ipsam iam cedere sensi / inque vicem tepuisse viro*, 1.2.164–165 [to the bride] *numquamne virili / summittere iugo*; see also Claud. *carm. min.* 25.115 … *vincitque suos auriga* [i.e. *Amor*] *iugales*. In elegy cf. e.g. Hor. *carm.* 1.33.10 ff. *sic visum Veneri, cui placet inparis / formas atque animos sub iuga aenea / saevo mittere cum ioco*, 2.5.1 ff. *Nondum subacta ferre iugum valet / cervice, nondum munia comparis / aequare*; Prop. 3.25.8 *tu bene conveniens non sinis ire iugum*; Ov. *epist.* 9.29–30. For analysis and discussion of the image of *iugum* found in erotic Latin poetry see A. La Penna, 'Note sul linguaggio erotico dell'elegia latina', *Maia* 4 (1951) 187–209, esp. 206.

[49] See e.g. Tert. *cult. fem.* 13 *prodite vos … annectentes cervicibus iugum, ux.* 2.8 *quale iugum fidelium duorum unius spei, unius voti, unius disciplinae, eiusdem servitutis*; Ambr. *hex.* 86.18; cf. A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (revised by H. Chirat), Strasbourg 1954, s.v. *iugum* 1, 3.

[50] See also Morelli (13n.) 418; Herzog (26n.) 386 who notes: "Das Joch (des Venuswagens) wird zum 'sanften Joch' Christi"; Consolino (16n.) 202 n. 15; Basson (24n.) 85.

[51] Cf. *carm. ad ux.* 45 *labor* and Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.8 *onus*; *sarcina* both in *carm. ad ux.*

yoke;[52] on the contrary, it is harsh[53] for those who are reluctant to follow Christian rules.[54] Moreover, one may make a further stylistic comparison between the pentameter in line 4 of Paulinus' poem 25:

et moderare levi || *subd**ita** | **colla iug**o*

and the pentameter in line 48 of the *Carmen ad uxorem*:

nec laedit blandum || *m**iti**a* | ***colla iug**um.*

The author of the *Carmen ad uxorem* brings to his text an affinity with the line of Paulinus' poem by means of verbal echoes, assonance, and rhythm, together with the final *iugum*.[55] The willingness to respect Christian precepts is conveyed by representing the docility of both couples (*mitia colla*, and *subdita colla* respectively), and in both cases the adjectives *blandum* and *levi*, which qualify the Christian yoke, are placed in emphatic position before the penthemimeral caesura.[56]

The author of the *Carmen ad uxorem* concentrates on explaining the nature of the Christian *iugum*. This, as emerges from lines 49 ff., is essentially formed by Christian precepts. In opposition to external events, the author aims at constructing a harmonious life for the couple, where the constraints of the Christian yoke are set against the collapse of natural and social bonds (cf. e.g. v. 7 *fragilisque membra mundi*). Thus, in lines 50–52 the pattern of philanthropy, cherished by the couple, is set in contrast with the external *furor* of line 27 … *omnes furor excitat armis*. The peaceful ideal of the *amator pacis* (v. 56 *insontem vitam pacis amator agat*) is pointedly opposed to the rejection of peace brought about by human beings (see esp. the hemistich of v. 27 *undique bella fremunt*, and at v. 30 the image *Pax abiit terris*). The couple's guiltless life (v. 56 *insontem vitam*) may also convey a deliberate criticism of the *furor* of war pointed to in line 27 f. As a result of their observance of Christian rules, the

47 and Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.7; Christian laws are mentioned in *carm. ad ux.* 46 *leges* and Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.7 *legis*.

[52] For meekness, cf. *carm. ad ux.* 47 *mansueto dorso*, and Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.8 *piis*. For the image of the light yoke, see *carm. ad ux.* 48 *blandum iugum* and Paul Nol. *carm.* 25.4–5 *levi iugo… / … leve iugum*.

[53] *carm. ad ux.* 45 *asper*; Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.7 *gravis*.

[54] *carm. ad ux.* 45 *rebellibus*; Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.7 *invitis*.

[55] Cf. also Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.191–192 *ergo mei memores par inviolabile semper / vivite*; *sit vobis crux veneranda iugum*. Bouma (11n.) 40 has illustrated that Paulinus mentions several time this particular metaphor, and that in other two instances he ends his line with the word *iugum*.

[56] The use of the elegiac couplets is notable precisely because it has never been used in the epithalamia until the wedding poems of Claudian in the fifth century.

couple will be able to reach a soothing state of concord that contrasts with the discord of the external world (see section 5). The *humanitas* of the couple appears to be the only means to overcome the frenzy of war and the ensuing poverty. To this extent, the *Carmen ad uxorem* may be interpreted as an example of a tendency in late antiquity that saw in the married couple "a reassuring microcosm of the social order".[57]

The list of precepts contained in lines 49–60 is not only a constituent feature of Christian parenetic literature but also a topical theme of the pagan epithalamium in which the newly-weds are advised about their duties.[58] The prime example of adaptation of this generic theme in a Christian epithalamium is contained in Paulinus' poem in the opposition between pagan and Christian marriage (see e.g. Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.41–40, 91–98, 141–143).[59] In Paulinus' view, Christian brides have to pursue sobriety and disregard the ornaments of costly jewels (25.43–44), oriental fabrics (25.51–52) and cosmetics (25.63–64).[60]

Similarly, in the *Carmen ad uxorem* the list of precepts encompasses the main norms of Christian life. The 'dialogic' relation between this text and the genre of the epithalamium leads the reader to find further subtle references to the standards of pagan wedding poems. For instance, the author underlines the need of a modest lifestyle and the spurn of power and wealth (vv. 69–73):

> *Non illos fallax cepit sapientia mundi,*
> *nec curas steriles inseruere polis.*
> *imperia et fasces, indocti munera vulgi,*
> *quasque orbis scelerum semina fecit opes,*
> *calcarunt sancta caelum ambitione petentes*

The deceptive wisdom of this world did not seduce them, nor did they bring fruitless studies to bear on the heavens. Power and authority,

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[57] P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York 1988, 16–17.

[58] Cf. e.g. Catul. 61.204–208 *ludite ut lubet, et brevi / liberos date. Non decet / tam vetus sine liberis / nomen esse, sed indidem / semper ingenerari*; see also P. Fedeli, *Il carme 61 di Catullo*, Freiburg 1972, 66 and 110; Costanza (37n.) 643; Basson (24n.) 83f.

[59] Herzog (26n.), 389 asserts that this poem is an example of "ekklesiologisch-asketische Poesie"; see also Morelli (13n.), 421 and Consolino (16n.), 208.

[60] Morelli (13n.), 418f. speaks of "sistematica antitesi" and "detestazione delle ricchezze"; of the same view are also Fontaine (5n.), 168 ("le refus du luxe des noces retient un peu longuement Paulin dan les facilités d'un développement à la manière du traité de Tertullien 'Sur la toilette des femmes': beau sujet pour un public tout à la fois aristocratique et ecclésiastique"); Bouma (11n.), 13; and Consolino (16n.), 203, 206–207.

gifts of the ignorant mob, and the wealth, which the world has made the seed of crimes, they have trampled, aiming for heaven with holy ambition.

The message of these lines stands in contrast with the appraisal of the wedding feast and the splendid adornments of the bride in pagan epithalamia. The couple, free from any social bonds, must be committed to internal purity in order to merit God's remuneration and to participate in the joys of Paradise.[61]

In the *Carmen ad uxorem*, as in Paulinus' epithalamium, the precepts are mainly based on the model of the Bible. However, the author of the *Carmen*, unlike Paulinus in his poem 25, does not mention any biblical *exemplum* to clarify the precepts, his sole aim being to outline the main Christian rules. Although in these lines there are no verbal

[61] Cf. e.g. *carm. ad ux.* 67–68 *his sordent terrena, patent caelestia nec se / captivos servos temporis huius agunt*, and 109 *non mirabor opes, nullos sectabor honores*; see e.g. Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.49–50 *interiore magis mundo placitura colatur / compta salutiferis dotibus ingenium*. One may also add another interesting parallel between the *Carmen ad uxorem* and Paulinus' epithalamium. The narrative of these two texts in respect to the presence of the parenesis (Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.43–68 and *carm. ad ux.* 49–60) contains a similar reference to the Christian prophecies of God's Last Judgement; cf. *carm. ad ux.* 61–62 *qui* ***credunt*** *sacros verum cecinisse prophetas / et qui non dubitant* ***verba*** *manere* ***Dei***, with Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.71–72 ***credite divinis verbis*** *de cultibus istis / poenalem cupidis surgere materiam*. The difference is that Paulinus proceeds to explain the prophecies of Isaiah, whereas in the *Carmen ad uxorem* there is only a brief hint at the prophecies regarding the severity of God's Judgement; see *carm. ad ux.* 65–66 *quique ipsum multa cum maiestate tremendum / expectant pingui lampade pervigiles*. There are further instances of verbal similarities between the *Carmen ad uxorem* and Paulinus' other poems, see e.g. *carm.* 26.6–7 *horrida longe /* ***bella fremant***, *nostris pax libera mentibus adsit* and *carm. ad ux.* 27 *undique* ***bella fremunt***, *omnes furor excitat armis*; *carm.* 14.120–128 *hic amor, hic labor est nobis; haec vota tuorum / suscipe commendaque deo, ut cum sedula cura / servitium nostrum longo tibi penderit aevo, / tunc demum placitos pietate laboris alumnos / absoluas mittente manu, / positasque tuorum / ante tuos vultus animas vectare paterno / nec renuas gremio domini fulgentis ad ora, / quem bonitate pium sed* ***maiestate tremendum*** *exora* and *carm. ad ux.* 65 *cum maiestate tremendum* quoted above; *carm.* 31.155–158 [Christ told the apostle Thomas that] *mortem hominum Christi crucifixi morte subactam / spemque resurgendi corporibus positam, / corporibus nostris, quia Christus victor in ista / carne* ***resurrexit***, *quam* ***gero***, *qua* ***morior*** and *carm. ad ux.* 86–87 *factus sum Christi corporis, ille mei, / me* ***gessit moriens***, *me victa morte* ***resurgens***; *carm.* 31.139–140 *de nostra victor Deus egit morte triumphum /* ***et*** *nostrum* ***secum*** *corpus in* ***astra tulit*** and *carm. ad ux.* 88 ***et secum*** *ad patrem me super* ***astra tulit***. See also the propositum of Christian martyrdom in *carm.* 26.20–28 *hunc ego, si Geticis agerem male subditus armis, / inter et inmites celebrarem laetus Alanos, / et si multiiugae premerent mea colla catenae, / captivis animum membris non iungeret hostis, / pectore non victo calcaret triste superba / servitium pietas* and *carm. ad ux.* 91–94 *ignem adhibe, rimare manu mea viscera, tortor, / effugient poenas membra soluta tuas. / carcere si caeco claudar nectarque catenis, / liber in excessu mentis adibo Deum*.

similarities with Paulinus' text, the composition is nonetheless similar to that of Paulinus. Paulinus makes in his poem a suggestive variation by substituting the three pagan gods called upon in the wedding poems, namely Juno, Cupid and Venus, with three new surrogate deities, viz. the virtues pax, pudor and pietas,[62] who have the role of protecting the newly-weds (vv. 9–14):

> *Absit ab ⟨his⟩ thalamis vani lascivia vulgi,*
> *Iuno Cupido Venus, nomina luxuriae.*
> *Sancta sacerdotis venerando pignora pacto*
> *iunguntur; coeant pax pudor et pietas.*
> *Nam pietatis amor simul est et amoris honestas*
> *paxque deo concors copula coniugii.*

This marriage must see nothing of the wanton conduct of the mindless mob; Juno, Cupid, Venus, those symbols of lust, must keep their distance. The chaste offspring of a bishop is being joined in sacred alliance; peace, modesty, and holiness must assemble as attendants. For a harmonious marriage-alliance is at once a holy love, an honourable love, and peace with God.

The advice to the couple contained in lines 49–56 of the *Carmen ad uxorem* evokes the symbolic attendants to the wedding of Julian and Titia in Paulinus' text:

> *tota mente Deus, tota vi cordis amari*
> *praecipitur: vigeat cura secunda hominis.*
> *quod sibi quis nolit fieri, non inferat ulli,*
> *vindictam laesus nesciat exigere.*
> *contentus modicis vitet sublimis haberi,*
> *sperni non timeat, spernere non soleat.*
> *parcus, vera loquens, et mente et corpore castus*
> *insontem vitam pacis amator agat.*

It is taught to love God with our entire mind, with the entire strength of our heart: let favourable care for our fellow human being flourish. What people do not want to happen to themselves, let them not inflict on another, someone who has been injured should not know how to demand revenge. Content with little, let him avoid being thought arrogant, let him not fear being despised, let him not be accustomed to

[62] Morelli (13n.), 418 was the first scholar to point out this feature: "Tre nuove divinità, per modo di dire, Pax Pudor e Pietas, surrogano le antiche Iuno Cupido Venus", although they are not specifically personified here.

despise. Frugal, speaking truthfully, pure both in mind and body, a lover of peace, let him lead a guiltless life.

In lines 49–52, thorough love of God, philanthropy and absence of anger may refer to the importance in Paulinus' poem 25 given to *pietas*, which is both love of God and benevolence to people.[63] The eulogy of *castitas*, symbol of faithful and reciprocal love, is another distinctive mark of Paulinus' epithalamium, where the topical wish for noble offspring in pagan wedding poems is subverted.[64] In Paulinus' poem 25, the married couple commits to celibacy within marriage. The concept, therefore, of chastity in this context is mainly associated with the virtue of sexual abstinence.[65] Similarly, the couple of the *Carmen ad uxorem* vows obedience to Christian precepts and, out of concern for the spiritual beautification of the soul, embarks on a shared struggle to lead lives of Christian virtue.[66]

A further interesting choice of words in the *Carmen ad uxorem* is *pacis amator* (56), which recalls both the presence of *pax* and the figure of the Christian lover in Paulinus' epithalamium. In pagan elegy, the *amator* is the professional lover committed to extra-marital liaisons.[67] In the epithalamium of Paulinus, the concept of *amator* is spiritualised, since the central figure of the poem is Christ in place of Venus.[68] In addition, the mention of *pax* indicates that the aim of the Christian couple is

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[63] See also *carm. ad ux.* 118 *exemplum vitae simus uterque piae*; cf. Blaise (48n.) s.v. *pietas* 1, 4.

[64] Cf. e.g. Catul. 61.204–228; Stat. *silv.* 1.2.229ff. According to Fontaine (5n.) 168 Paulinus' epithalamium is a "'conversion' radicale du genre antique en *l'adynaton* d'un marriage qui n'est pas un".

[65] Cf. e.g. Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.1–2 *casto sociantur amore, / virgo puer Christi, virgo puella dei*; 25.235–236 *votorum prior hic gradus est, ut nescia carnis, / membra gerant.* However, as Consolino (16n.) 211 points out, because of the presence in the same poem of both the exhortation of sexual abstinence and the hope of begetting children, Paulinus seems to contradict himself: "resta difficile da spiegare l'esortazione a mantenersi vergini, che Paolino rivolge ai due sposi, anche se in modo non perentorio perchè immediatamente le affianca la più ovvia e normale ipotesi che il matrimonio venga consumato". Consolino (16n.), 212–213 explains this seeming contradiction as a 'soluzione di compromesso' which allowed Julian to get married and have children before he had continued in his ecclesiastical career. See also H. Crouzel, 'L'epitalamio di San Paolino: il suo contenuto dottrinale', *XXXI cinquantenario della morte di S. Paolino di Nola (431–1981)*. Atti del Convegno, Nola, 20–21 March 1982, Rome 1983, 143–148.

[66] Cf. also *carm. ad ux.* 75 *nec labor hos durus vincit nec blanda voluptas.*

[67] Cf. *TLL* s.v. 1829.20ff.

[68] See Morelli (13n.), 419; W. Schmid, 'Elegie', *RAC* 4 (1959) 1058; Herzog (26n.), 386, Consolino (16n.), 206, Basson (24n.), 88f.

to seek peace, which comes from harmonious lives in accordance with God's rules.[69] Similarly, in the *Carmen ad uxorem*, the words *amator pacis* allude respectively to the spiritualised, sincere lover yoked to Christ, and to the concord of the couple.

As previously mentioned, another topical figure in the literary texture of the pagan epithalamium is *Iuno pronuba*, who had the role of marrying the couple by the ritual of the *dextrarum iunctio* (union of the couple's right hands). In Paulinus' epithalamium, *Iuno* is replaced by Christ who attends the ceremony and blesses the married couple as he did at the wedding of Cana when he miraculously turned water into wine. Paulinus, therefore, portrays the Christian wedding as a spiritual ceremony the guests of which are not the pagan gods but rather Christ who, together with the Virgin Mary, assists the newly-weds in their marital life.[70]

In the *Carmen ad uxorem*, Christ, although not specifically called *pronubus*, is frequently invoked in the second half of the poem (vv. 77–114) as the supreme model of Christian endurance. With the figure of Christ the author of the *Carmen* adds another variation to the thematic register of the Christian epithalamium. In the last part of the poem, Christ is called upon as the exemplar of Christian ability to withstand tortures (81–82 *flagris dorsa, alapis maxillas, ora salivis / praebuit et figi se cruce non renuit*), as a source of hope (97–98 *non metuo exsilium, domus omnibus una est, / sperno famem, Domini fit mihi sermo cibus*), and also as a thaumaturgical aid against pain (100–102 *tu das, Christe, loqui toque pati tribuis. / in nobis nihil audemus, sed fidimus in te, / quos pugnare iubes et superare facis*).

How can one interpret the unusual presence of tropes familiar to the theme of Christian martyrdom in a text imbued with themes and images commonly deemed as distinctive marks of the genre of the epithalamium? The answer may be found if one considers that in the *Carmen ad uxorem* there is another element of transformation of the thematic register of the epithalamium: the absence of a mythological section. Statius and Claudian gave more predominance to the description of mythological scenes than their predecessors did. Statius, for instance, presented the description of the house of Venus as one of the important

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[69] See Herzog (26n.), 387.

[70] Cf. Paul. Nol. *carm.* 25.151 ff. and esp. 151–152 *tali lege suis nubentibus adstat Iesus / pronubus et vini nectare mutat aquam.* Christ is also presented as the model Christian bridegroom in the mystical marriage with his bride, the Church (see 25.192 ff.). On the central role of Christ, see also Morelli (13n.), 419 f.; Herzog (26n.), 387; Consolino (16n.), 201.

sections of his epithalamium.[71] By contrast, Paulinus removed from his epithalamium any presence of mythology and replaced it with a number of narratives taken from the Bible.[72] This, however, is not a mere case of *Ersatz* because Paulinus was able to give to his digression a new function: the biblical figures mentioned by Paulinus were not physically present at the ceremony (unlike Venus and Cupid who, in the epithalamia of Statius and Claudian, took part as guests to the wedding), but only evoked in order to offer to the newly-weds valuable *exempla* of Christian life.

In her article on the Christian epithalamium of Paulinus, Consolino posits that the presence of biblical examples is a frequent *Leitmotiv* in the work of Paulinus, who considered the Bible as the source of truth and, more importantly, a source of inspiration not inferior to that of reading pagan authors.[73] This point is relevant to my approach to the *Carmen ad uxorem* because the wealth of allusions to, and similarities with, the genre of the epithalamium helps to trace in this poem further substitutions of pagan motifs with Christian themes: in the *Carmen ad uxorem* the concise narration of the *patientia* of Christ during his trial and crucifixion recalls the biblical examples of Paulinus' epithalamium. Christ is not only the guarantor of the harmony of the couple (as is the case in the epithalamium of Paulinus), but also, and above all, the embodiment of Christian resilience and, ultimately, of regeneration.

Marital 'Concordia'

The *Carmen ad uxorem* ends with a final appeal of the husband to his wife to succour him in the case of adverse fortune, and to live with him according to the principles of mutual help, concord and Christian piety. This close bond of affection will help the couple in their journey to sanctity and to spiritual union (115–122):

> *tu modo, fida comes, mecum isti accingere pugnae,*
> *quam Deus infirmo praebuit auxilium.*
> *sollicita elatum cohibe, solare dolentem;*
> *exemplum vitae simus uterque piae.*

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[71] Cf. e.g. Stat. *silv.* 1.2.50–102.

[72] Cf. Bouma (11n.), 13 and Consolino (16n.), 207.

[73] See Consolino (16n.) 203 and n. 21; cf. also Ruggiero (32n.), 82: "Le espressioni bibliche si inseriscono e si illuminano di mille riflessi entrando nella struttura della nuova poesia cristiana, che sa guardare al passato".

custos esto tui custodis, mutua redde;
erige labentem, surge levantis ope,
ut caro non eadem tantum, sed mens quoque nobis
una sit atque duos spiritus unus alat.

Just now, you, faithful companion, gird yourself with me for this struggle, you whom God has given as help to a weak man. Heedful restrain me in pride, comfort me in sorrow! Let the two of us be an example of a pious life. Be guardian of your guardian, give back what you receive! Raise me up when I slip, rise up with the aid of me raising you, so that we might be not only one flesh but also one mind and a single spirit nourish both of us.

This concluding group of verses is thematically connected with the introductory section of the poem: the final address to the wife and the exhortation to Christian retirement pick up and emphasise the themes of mutual support, faithfulness and the praise of *concordia* conveyed in the initial appeal (cf. vv. 1–16).

As noted with reference to the anacreontic lines, in this final section, too, Christian and pagan motifs are intertwined. The emphasis on the mutual love and harmony of the couple is a topos of the wedding poem that recurs in pagan and Christian texts and it can be traced back to the epithalamium of Sappho.[74] Furthermore, these lines echo, verbally and thematically, the wish for peace and unity expressed by Paulinus in his epithalamium (25.193–196):

Illius ut matris nati, quae sponsa sororque est,
sumite digna piis pectora nominibus,
et vobis fratres sponso concurrite Christo,
sitis ut aeterni corporis una caro

As children of that mother who is both spouse and sister, you must train your hearts to be worthy of the holy names you bear. As brother and sister hasten together to meet Christ the Bridegroom, so that you may be one flesh in the eternal body.

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[74] See e.g. Sappho fr. 116 L.-P. χαῖρε, νύμφα, χαῖρε, τίμιε γάμβρε, πόλλα; Theocr. 18.49 χαίροις ὦ νύμφα, χαίροις εὐπένθερε γάμβρε; Catul. 61.225 f. … *at boni / coniuges, bene vivite* (where *bene vivite* probably corresponds to *felices*, *concordes vivite*); Stat. *silv.* 1.2.240 … *insigni geminat Concordia taeda*. Wheeler (12n.), 214 finds this is a recurring feature in the rhetoricians' lists of themes of the epithalamium. Among Christian authors cf. e.g. Aug. *serm.* 51.17, 20.30; *epist.* 31.6 (the harmonious relationship of Paulinus of Nola and his wife Therasia is mention as the example of Christian marriage); see also Brown (56n.), 402 ff.

Fidelity and harmony were in traditional Roman expectations the greatest achievements of marriage: partners should share all things in common and cherish harmony. These are also values cherished by Christian Fathers, who believed that a faithful companionship must rest on the union of minds of husband and wife more than on the physical relationship. It is in this context of friendship that, for instance, Augustine proposes that the embodiment of genuine marital love is found in the chaste marriage of Joseph and Mary (cf. e.g. Aug. *serm.* 51).[75]

Moreover, some passages of the Bible (chiefly *Gen.* 2:24 *relinquet homo patrem suum, et matrem, et adhaerebit uxori suae: et erunt duo in carne una*, but see also *Mt.* 19:6) prompted many Christian authors to foster the belief that marriage had to be interpreted as a spiritual and mystical union. For instance, Tertullian, at the end of the *Ad uxorem* (2.8.7), celebrates the bliss of the Christian couple where the spouses live sharing the same hope, the same desire, and the same discipline: *quale iugum fidelium duorum unius spei, unius voti, unius disciplinae, eiusdem servitutis.* (…) *Ubi caro una, unus et spiritus: simul orant, simul volutantur, simul ieiunia transigunt, alterutro docentes, alterutro exhortantes, alterutro sustinentes*. In this passage, Tertullian conveys the idea of a married couple as a small religious community driven by the same heavenly ideals. This is also the likely interpretation of the presence of *una caro* in Paulinus' epithalamium and *caro eadem* in the *Carmen ad uxorem*. In both cases, the image of the couple represented as "one flesh" is to be understood as a spiritual *copula coniugii*.[76]

Conclusion

The genre of the epithalamium forms the main thread of the thematic texture of the *Carmen ad uxorem* and the epithalamium of Paulinus is possibly one particular literary model. The ascetic life of Paulinus and

[75] Cf. E. Clark, 'Adam's Only Companion: Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 21 (1986) 139–162. Augustine prefers to avoid any connection between sexuality and marital love, and even when he does define the nature of the conjugal bond he resorts to the 'asexual' expression *piae caritatis adfectus* (*de gen. ad litt.* 3.21.33), redolent of the pagan topos of *amicitia*. Augustine's point of view is that matrimonial love ought to aim at the prelapsarian relationship of Adam and Eve, love devoid of the *malum* of *concupiscentia*. On this matter see also J. Doignon, 'Une definition oubliée de l'amour conjugal édénique chez Augustine: *piae caritatis adfectus* (*Gen. ad litt.* 3,21,33)', *Vetera christianorum* 19 (1982) 25–36.

[76] Cf. Consolino (16n.), 203 n. 18.

his wife constitutes an example of Christian marriage, and Paulinus' poem 25 is the model of the Christian epithalamium, which pointedly subverts and reinterprets in a Christian context some topoi of the pagan wedding poems. The rich presence of echoes from pagan and Christian texts and the many thematic variations reveal a high level of *doctrina* in the author of the *Carmen ad uxorem*, who appears to be well acquainted with literary models of pagan and Christian literature. This poem was certainly conceived for the taste and knowledge of an educated reader who was able to appreciate the effective subversion of the prominent role that sexuality had in pagan wedding poems into the antithetical value of spiritual marriage and sexual chastity of Christian ascetic marriage.

PRINCIPLES OF STRUCTURE AND UNITY IN LATIN BIBLICAL EPIC

M. Hoffmann

The following article deals with the principles of structure and unity in Latin biblical epic by examining book 3 of the *Spiritual History* of Avitus of Vienne. The *Spiritual History* is a very complex and fascinating work, and while it is impossible to do it justice in the limited space of one short article, I hope to convey some of its more fascinating aspects in this brief overview.

First I shall provide some background information.[1] Avitus succeeded his father as bishop of Vienne in southern France about 490. He belonged to the former senatorial aristocracy. When the collapse of the Western Empire brought the provinces under foreign domination, these families lost their political function. With the traditional political offices no longer open to them, their members tended to go into the church hierarchy. They maintained some sense of collective identity by exchanging letters. Avitus was not only active in the church politics of his day, but also stayed on friendly terms with the foreign rulers of Burgundy, who were Arians, even though he himself was a Catholic like the rest of the population. Of Avitus' prose writings a collection of letters survives, as well as fragments of theological treatises and homilies.

His biblical epic, fully entitled *The Deeds of Spiritual History*, is divided into five books. The first three form a continuous narrative. They contain the Creation of the World, the Original Sin and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. By contrast, books 4 and 5 stand apart. They deal with the Great Flood and the Crossing of the Red Sea.

There is no need here to discuss whether these five books form a coherent overall structure—in fact they do—,[2] but it should be noted

[1] The best overview of the life and times of Avitus can be found in the introduction of D.R. Shanzer / I.N. Wood, *Avitus of Vienne, Letters and Selected Prose; Translated with an introduction and notes*, Liverpool 2002, 3–27.

[2] The unity of the *Spiritual History* has been convincingly demonstrated by A. Arweiler, *Die Imitation antiker und spätantiker Literatur in der Dichtung 'De spiritalis historiae gestis' des*

that choosing different passages from the Bible for poetic treatment already constitutes a form of exegesis. Selection implies judgement: some tales are more important than others. Also, the juxtaposition of different passages from the Scriptures encourages the reader to look for parallels between them. And this is always true, whether the parallel is explicitly stated in the text or not.

I shall now focus on book 3. This book appears to be composed of seemingly disparate elements thrown together. Adam and Eve are judged by God and expelled from paradise. These events are narrated in the first 200 verses. The second, slightly longer part of the book contains the story of the rich man and Lazarus, together with a hymn praising the willingness of God to forgive the repentant sinner.

First we shall take a closer look at the rich man and Lazarus. The story is taken from Luke 16. Lazarus, a pauper, begs for leftover scraps from the rich man's table. The rich man ignores him. They both die at the same time. Lazarus ends up in paradise with Abraham, the rich man in the flames of hell. They are kept apart by an abyss, but can see each other. The rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus over to him with some cooling water. Abraham refuses, because the rich man's repentance comes too late to have any effect. The rich man then asks Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers, who are still alive, so that they may be warned and change their ways before it is too late. This request is also refused.

One cannot but wonder how this story is connected with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. However, Avitus makes the connection explicit. He describes their reaction after they have been cast out to fend for themselves. Of course they are very distressed, and weep for the first time (Alc. Avit. carm. 3, 209–221):[3]

Alcimus Avitus; Mit einem Kommentar zu Avit. Carm. 4,429–540 und 5,526–703, Berlin & New York 1999, 13–23, 40–55, 59–61, 308–317.

[3] The Latin text given here is that of R. Peiper, *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Viennensis episcopi opera quae supersunt*, Berlin 1883, except for minor changes in punctuation. The first three books of the *Spiritual History* have recently been reedited by N. Hecquet-Noti, *Avit de Vienne, Histoire spirituelle, Tome I (Chants I–III); Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, Paris 1999. However, textual matters are far from settled, see Th. Gärtner, 'Zur Bibeldichtung "De spiritalis historiae gestis" des Alcimus Avitus', *JbAC* 43 (2000) 126–186; Idem, 'Untersuchungen zum Text und zu den literarischen Vorbildern der Dichtungen des Alcimus Avitus', *JbAC* 44 (2001) 75–100. The *Spiritual History* has been translated into English by G.W. Shea, *The Poems of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus: Translation and Introduction*, Tempe, Arizona 1997.

tunc inter curas permixti felle doloris
adfectus sensere novos, et pectora pulsans
nondum conpertas prorumpit fletus in undas,
attentisque genis iniussus defluit umor.
haud aliter vivax deceptus mole caduca
spiritus, inpleto venit cum terminus aevo,
post obitum peccata dolet. tum quidquid iniquum
gesserit, in mentem revocat, tum paenitet omnis
errorum lapsus, semet quos iudice damnat,
et si praeteritae reddatur copia vitae,
sponte ferat, quoscumque dabunt mandata labores.
sanctus namque refert de quodam divite Lucas,
quem nimio luxu dissolvens vita fovebat.

Avitus goes on to recount the story, but he has already given its moral. The rich man's repentance is ineffective because it comes too late. But Avitus' words equally apply to Adam. Adam's grief, not recorded in the Bible, is an outward sign of repentance that also comes too late to be of any use. The outlines of Avitus' interpretation become clearer after the story of the rich man and Lazarus has been told (Alc. Avit. carm. 3, 306–314):

ille (i.e. dives) quidem poscens effectum non capit ullum,
nos autem, dum vita manet, dum luce vigemus,
olim defuncti perterret nuntius Adam,
dum locus est flendi, dum non iniussa petuntur
nec obduratis pulsatur ianua serris.
novimus en cuncti, quid primus planxerit ille,
qui pulsus prisca nescivit sede reverti.
namque obitum quendam casu tum pertulit ipso,
perdita ne precibus lacrimisve reduceret ullis.

Some points are worth mentioning here. To Avitus, the Fall of Man is a case of a missed opportunity to repent in time. This does not strike me as the most obvious interpretation. In fact, I am unable to provide a parallel for it. However, the rich man is a far more clear-cut example of ineffective repentance after death. So Avitus inserts the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This enables him to highlight—or create—the parallels he sees between Adam and the rich man. For example, Adam is said to have suffered death through the Fall. This is not such a far-fetched notion, because man is no longer immortal after the Fall—it is a kind of death sentence. Also, Adam cannot return to paradise, just as nobody comes back to life after death.

Avitus' interpretation of the Fall has one surprising implication. After the expulsion, repentance will no longer gain Adam forgiveness. It fol-

lows that an earlier attempt would have succeeded. We have to assume that for Avitus, the original sin of Adam and Eve is a pardonable offence. There is indeed a tantalising glimpse of what might have been, when God questions Adam before passing sentence on him. Avitus takes great pains to show that Adam remains unrepentant and stubborn, considerably expanding the biblical account (Alc. Avit. carm. 3, 90–94). He may have taken his cue from Augustine, who in *De genesi ad litteram* also characterises Adam's behaviour as that of an arrogant and hardened sinner:[4]

> *ille (i.e. Adam) ubi convictum claro se lumine vidit,*
> *prodidit et totum discussio iusta reatum,*
> *non prece submissa veniam pro crimine poscit,*
> *non votis lacrimisve rogat, nec vindice fletu*
> *praecurrit meritam supplex confessio poenam.*

Adam goes on to blame Eve, claiming that she seduced him into eating the forbidden fruit. The Latin *praecurrit* (v. 94) is ambiguous. It could mean either 'anticipate' or 'avert his just punishment'. Therefore it is not made quite explicit that Adam could have been pardoned if he had only accepted his guilt and asked for forgiveness. But then, mercy does not figure as an option in the biblical story. Avitus may well have been anxious not to deviate from the canonical version, not even by explicitly mentioning the possibility of mercy. Yet why should he counsel humility and repentance unless he saw it as a genuine alternative, that is, a real way out for Adam?

There are two things that I hope to have shown from this passage: a) Juxtaposing the two stories of the expulsion from paradise and of the rich man and Lazarus changes the way the story of the Fall is told. These changes are quite subtle. b) Their juxtaposition also changes the way the reader looks at them. Therefore, he is likely to detect even small and subtle changes to the stories.

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[4] Aug. gen. ad litt. 11, 39 p. 369, 19–21 *superbia! numquid dixit: peccavi? habet deformitatem confusionis et non habet confessionis humilitatem.* Earlier scholarship on the *Spiritual History* tended to be more concerned with poetic sources and techniques of imitation than with the influence of patristic thought and writings. Notable exceptions are D.J. Nodes, *Doctrine and Exegesis in Biblical Latin Poetry*, Leeds 1993; Idem, 'Avitus of Vienne's *Spiritual History* and the Semipelagian Controversy: the Doctrinal Implications of Books I–III', *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984) 185–195; I.N. Wood, 'Avitus of Vienne: the Augustinian Poet', in: R.W. Mathisen / D.R. Shanzer (eds.), *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul; Revisiting the Sources*, Aldershot 2001, 263–277. See also Arweiler (n. 2).

Up to now, I have focused on the connection between Adam and the rich man. But there is one more player in Avitus' text, and that is the reader. Let us return to the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and the comment that Avitus gives at the end of it: the rich man is long dead and beyond help, but for the reader there is still hope (Alc. Avit. carm. 3, 306–310):

> *ille (i.e. dives) quidem poscens effectum non capit ullum,*
> *nos autem, dum vita manet, dum luce vigemus,*
> *olim defuncti perterret nuntius Adam,*
> *dum locus est flendi, dum non iniussa petuntur*
> *nec obduratis pulsatur ianua serris.*

Underlying these lines is a fairly common Christian concept: the unrepentant sinner cannot himself be saved, but he still fulfils a useful function as an example deterring others. This concept is applied to Adam elsewhere, notably by Augustine in *De genesi ad litteram*.[5] However, the use Avitus makes of it is unusual in one respect. For him, the fact that Adam serves as a warning to posterity is the *central point* of the story of the Fall of Man—and arguably, also of his entire epic, because book 3 is in the middle of it. Avitus' *Spiritual History* is by no means didactic poetry in the conventional sense, but, like most Christian verse writing, it has a didactic component. The poet wishes to convey the point mentioned above, namely that Adam should be a warning to us, and, as we shall see later, he wants us to draw the consequences.

The rich man had asked for someone to return from the dead and warn his brothers to change their evil ways. In Avitus, he asks for some unspecified person (*quisquam*, v. 304), whereas in the Bible the messenger is asked to be Lazarus (Luke 16, 27). Why is that? Because Adam here takes over the role of that messenger. This identification of Adam and the unspecified messenger is aided by the expression 'Adam who died long ago' (*olim defuncti … Adam*, v. 308): in a manner of speaking, he returns from the dead to warn us. Of course, if Adam returns to warn *us*, then we are like the brothers of the rich man: still alive, and in sore need of repentance.

It is worth asking exactly how Adam, after his death, can still convey his message to us. Is it because Avitus resurrects him, so to speak, in his poetry? Or because he lives on in the biblical account? Either way, Avitus is referring to written material on Adam, not his actual

[5] Aug. gen. ad litt. 11, 39 p. 374, 16–22.

resurrection. This corresponds nicely to the reaction of Abraham, when the rich man begs him to send Lazarus to his brothers: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them" (Luke 16, 29), and again later "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they will pay no heed even if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16, 31). By "Moses and the prophets" Abraham definitely means the Pentateuch and the books of the Prophets, that is, he refers to written material, yet he also speaks of them as if they were living persons.

By now, Avitus has firmly established that we are in need of salvation. He underlines this point by painting a bleak picture of living conditions on earth after the Fall. There are two main problems. One, nature fights against mankind, employing illnesses, wild beasts, storms and sterile fields that yield only thorns and thistles. Two, mankind fights against itself, using weapons in warfare and conducting legal actions in the short intervals between wars.

That description is followed by a hymn. It praises Christ's willingness to welcome the returning sinner back into the fold. At the end, it turns into a prayer for salvation. The layout of book 3 is carefully crafted. It is not so far removed from what a preacher addressing his congregation might use to make his sermon effective: first, show the necessity for repentance by painting as bleak a picture as possible; next, show that salvation can be achieved; and finally, pray for salvation. I mention in passing that the hymn is strongly influenced by Ambrose's commentary on Luke 10, 30, but that is not my main concern here.[6] Instead, I would like to look at one particular passage from the hymn (Alc. Avit. carm. 3, 365–369):

> *qui (sc. Christe) dudum multo latitantem pulvere dragmam*
> *invenis accensis verbi virtute lucernis.*
> *linquentem caulas turpique errore vagantem*
> *pastor ovem celeri dignatus quaerere gressu*
> *subvehis.*

In the biblical parables (Luke 15, 1–10), Christ looking for the sinner is *like* a woman lighting a lamp and sweeping her house because she has lost a silver coin. Here, the exegesis is incorporated into the parable. Christ is substituted for the woman—and later for the shepherd. The phrase 'by lighting lamps with the power of Your word' (*accen-*

[6] Ambr. in Luc. 7, 73. For a more detailed discussion see M. Hoffmann, *Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus*, De spiritalis historiae gestis; *Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, München & Leipzig 2005, XLI–XLV.

sis verbi virtute lucernis, v. 366) would make no sense if applied to the woman—she is no conjurer. The phrase does not, in fact, belong to the parable but to its interpretation: Christ enlightens the sinner with the gospel he preaches. What was once a parable has, at least in a spiritual sense, become a real event. Later on in the hymn, Christ sends to paradise one of the thieves who were crucified with him. To Avitus, both instances are equally valid examples of Christ's mercy. He does not distinguish between the spiritual reality for which the parable stands and historical events.

I have come to the end of this short overview, and offer the following conclusions. Book 3 of Avitus' *Spiritual History* forms a coherent structure. It is coherent because all its elements share the same purpose, namely to convey a particular interpretation of the Fall: Adam's fate serves as a warning to posterity. To put it another way, the structure of book 3 is determined by exegetical concerns. Avitus uses the exegetical technique of juxtaposing different passages from the Bible and pointing out parallels between them. He may subtly alter these passages so as to make them fit his exegetical agenda.

Avitus is not interested in a continuous narrative on the macro-level. Things are different on the micro-level, that is, in individual passages. There, as we have seen in vv. 365–369, he is quite capable of making exegetical points without disturbing the narrative—remember the lamps lit 'with the power of Your word'.

INTERPRETING CULTURAL CHANGE: SEMIOTICS AND EXEGESIS IN DRACONTIUS' *DE LAUDIBUS DEI*

A. Arweiler

Literary histories use to classify Dracontius' *De laudibus Dei* (henceforth: LD), written during the last years of the fifth century AD, as biblical poetry, sometimes even as biblical 'epics'. But the reader who went through the text's roughly 2300 hexameters may find himself asking what exactly 'biblical' is meant to denote: the three books contain a seemingly heterogeneous chain of various elements such as praise, confession, prayer, cosmological speculation, theological and apologetic reasoning, episodes from the Bible, accounts of Roman history and myth. If there is narration, it does not follow the sequence of the biblical books, and apparently is not arranged according to chronological or comparable patterns of literary narrative as to be found e.g. in ancient epics, oratory or historiography. In fact, the only biblical episode of considerable length is the account of the creation in the first book,[1] and it is no wonder that attempts to give satisfying summaries of the content or to explain the text's coherence have brought forward frustration among Dracontius' readers.[2]

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[1] M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*, Liverpool 1985 (ARCA 16), 4 has explicitly included the "Genesis paraphrase" into his study, but excluded the rest of LD as a "largely non-biblical work". The creation story is not surprisingly the best studied passage of the poem, cf. K. Smolak, 'Die Stellung der Hexamerondichtung des Dracontius (laud. dei 1, 118–426) innerhalb der lateinischen Genesispoesie', in: *Antidosis. Festschrift für* W. Kraus, hrsg. v. R. Hanslik u.a., Wien u.a. 1972 (WS Beih. 5), 381–397; W. Speyer, 'Der Bibeldichter Dracontius als Exeget des Sechstagewerkes Gottes', in: *Stimuli. Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum, Festschrift für E. Dassmann*, hrsg. v. G. Schöllgen u. C. Scholten, Münster 1996, 464–484., M. Mülke, 'Interpolationen im Dracontius', in: *Alvarium. Festschrift für C. Gnilka*, hrsg. v. W. Blümer, Münster 2002, 279–291.

[2] With few exceptions (e.g., M. Manitius, *Geschichte der christlich-lateinischen Poesie bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1891, 327–340) many responses remained similar to what Irwin in 1942 wrote prefacing his commentary: "Dracontius is charged with a paucity of literary taste, with an obvious lack of clarity in expressing his ideas, with a tendency to be unduly repetitious, and with an irresistible impulse to deviate from his central theme". Those who examined single passages found more to

The rareness of continuous narrative in the LD and the breaking up of the biblical sequence of events into scattered episodes that are incorporated whenever thought of as appropriate, is (up to a certain point) a feature that the LD has in common with several other late antique hexametrical poems with Christian, or, in a stricter sense, biblical contents, because many of them show a strong tendency to complement the implicit interpretation that was characteristic of ancient poetics by explicit commentaries on the biblical texts they use as sources of inspiration.[3] But, in contrast to the LD, poems like Sedulius' *Carmen paschale* or Avitus' *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, though often concentrating their selection of subject-matter upon theological principles such as salvation history, are built upon a narrative structure at their basis, following e.g. the sequence of biblical episodes or ordering the narrated events around the central figure according to the pattern of 'deeds of a hero' (biblical figures as well as saints and memorable Christian martyrs). The contents of the LD are not linked to each other by such elements of the narrated discourse, nor is their unity obvious from thematical similarities as is the case with e.g. the Ovidian *Metamorphoses*, the LD thus being a striking prove of R. Herzog's observation that the biblical poetry up to the fifth century AD has developed a literary aesthetics of its own whose nature is not comprehensible by concentrating on questions of continuity and replacement of pagan genres.[4] Reflection upon the aesthetic conditions of the poet's task, and the problematic relationship with the canonical text of the Bible, lines up the LD with e.g. the *Alethia* of Claudius Marius Victorius, especially as both answer questions their readers may have posed regarding the nature of the works.[5]

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praise (cf. D. Nodes, 'Benevolent winds and the Spirit of God in De laudibus Dei of Dracontius', VChr 43 (1989) 282–292, 282 "one of the finest of the late antique biblical epics").

[3] On techniques of 'manipulation of the biblical text' in the biblical poets (such as abbreviation, omission, transposition, conflation etc.) see M. Roberts (n. 1) 107–160.

[4] Cf. R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike. Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, München 1975, esp. LX–LXIII; on modes of selection and arrangement esp. in Avitus cf. Arweiler (n. 7) 40–41. 52–55. passim, on the Ovidian model prevailing over e.g. epic narrative such as Vergil's Aeneid, 54 with n. 143.

[5] Cf. Herzog (n. 4) LIV–LX on these aspects, LXXVII (and 155–162) on his solution to shift the question from elements of the text's inner organization to the analysis of 'Erbaulichkeit' (*aedificatio*) as "ästhetische Kategorie, als die Rezeptivität christlichen Sprechens" (157).

Starting from these observations, it may be promising to ask what exactly replaces the coherence built upon contents and what elements may be discernible that have been assigned the organizing functions narrative patterns regularly fulfil. One such element seems to be the role of the speaking poet as constructed by Dracontius in the LD, as its astonishingly strong presence pervades the whole work and is deeply involved into the text's inner organization.[6] That the poets enter their texts as exegetes, use their authority to exhort the reader, to explain exegetical problems, and to reject wrong interpretations, is also a widespread feature of biblical poetry.[7] Dracontius seems to radicalize the literary presence of the poet within his text by making him the only source of coherence, i.e. assigning to him the task of proving the coherence of seemingly disparate contents by presenting a method of interpreting them: the question of whether a subject-matter is to be integrated into a poem or not is shifted from the comparability of elements of content to their affinity in meaning which can be convincingly constructed only by the narrating poet and his interpretative ability.

A second feature that may affect the way we consider the problem of interpretation as a means and a subject of 'biblical' poetry is also a shared one between the LD and similar late antique poems. Most of them, in contrast to their pagan predecessors, address various and heterogeneous audiences: pagan and Christian, orthodox and heretic, adherents of consenting or contradicting exegetical traditions—and, finally, God himself, whose presence is felt to dominate both the production of the text and its reception, both being ultimately conceived of as acts of worship.[8] This variety of audiences generates a variety of

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[6] Stella (n. 14) 258–259 has convincingly criticized trials to apply the notion of 'Gattungsmischung' and rightly stressed the relevance of analyzing relations between different elements in order to detect the dominant structural features. The way the speaking first person adresses his audiences may be a further element to be integrated into this kind of research.

[7] Many readers used the word 'commentators' to denote the authors of biblical poetry. On the impact of biblical commentaries on the biblical poets (concerning the language as well as the content) cf. A. Arweiler, *Die Imitation antiker und spätantiker Literatur in der Dichtung 'De spiritalis historiae gestis' des Alcimus Avitus. Mit einem Kommentar zu Avit. carm. 4,429–540 und 5,526–703*, Berlin 1999 (UaLG 52), 24–37 on different ways of using exegetical literature in Avitus.

[8] On this fundamental feature of Christian poetry cf. Stella (n. 14) 262 n. 21 with reference to J. Fontaine, 'Le mélange des genres dans la poésie de Prudence', in: *Forma futuri, Studi in onore del card. Pellegrino*, Torino 1975, 773 ("un même et double discours est tenu à la fois aux hommes et à Dieu").

possible relations between a poet and his respective audiences, as each of them has to be addressed by different modes of speaking, a condition that has a considerable impact on the interpretation of biblical materials: orthodox exegesis, as Augustine observed, is often motivated by the need to answer heretical interpretation, clarifying its own principles through dialogue with opponents.[9] The LD incorporates, as we will see, this dialogical structure of exegetical discussion into the text's organization, thus transferring the historical setting of the text's production, characterized by the involvement of various audiences with different interpretative attitudes, into a compositional feature of the text, and a subject of the poem.

In fact, it is tempting to relate the text's struggling with unity, the divergence of subject matters, and the variation of modes of speaking to the specific cultural background the text emerges from. The author's figure as constructed mainly from the information given by the *Satisfactio* assembles many features that constitute the cultural transformations and struggles for new identities of his time and place: a member of a senatorial family, educated in the traditional Roman way, living in northern Africa, adhering to orthodox Catholic faith, suffering from oppression by the Arian Vandal invaders.[10] If the characteristically Carthaginian climate of diverging and converging views, conflicting and melting convictions, multicultural traditions, claims, religions, and powers can be identified as the historical background of the LD,[11] one of the underlying literary intentions may be the reordering and reconciling of those conflicting streams of a changing world into a tolerable whole. The conditions wherefrom Christian literary production of Dracontius' times emerges, are mirrored by the literary forms that are adopted, and, as these genres and compositional choices are all related to the search for new reading principles regarding both cultural traditions and literary texts (canonical or not), we may speak, to modify

[9] Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 67,39 (ed. E. Dekkers / I. Fraipont, CCL 39 [1990] 896): *Multi enim sensus scripturarum sanctarum latent, et paucis intellegentioribus noti sunt; nec asseruntur commodius et acceptabilius, nisi cum respondendi haereticis cura compellit.* On the relevance of the term *respondere* for Dracontius' poetics cf. below.

[10] On Dracontius' senatorial rank, his leading positions in administration and his famous imprisonment etc. see Moussy (n. 16) 7–31.

[11] On the special atmosphere of the African metropolis in late antiquity see e.g. F. Clover, 'Carthage and the Vandals', in: J.H. Humphrey (ed.), Excavations at Carthage 1978, conducted by the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 1982, 1–22.

the famous term of E.R. Dodds,[12] of late antique literature as being a part of and a sign for an 'age of interpretation'.[13]

Dracontian scholarship has increased in recent years, but we are still in need of detailed explanations and a full commentary.[14] The research regarding single passages and their conscious interweaving of sources should surely warn us from underestimating the poetic and exegetical skills of Dracontius who is in full command of the allusive techniques developed in ancient poetic practices. This essay will concentrate on some observations of how interpretation is related to the structure and intent of the LD. I would like to show that it is interpretation itself the poem is concerned with, which means that it is not only using specific ways of interpreting texts, but presenting a selection of interpretative tools, and discussing the need for interpretation as a fundamental feature of human existence as opposed to the divine. Dracontius explores Christian faith as a principle of interpretation that is not limited to single phenomena, but includes history, culture and nature in order to offer what we may term a universal semiotic code.

Didactics, Apologetics, Confession—and Semiotics: Outlines of the De laudibus Dei

The very beginning of LD defines the didactic as well as argumentative outline of the text.[15] It precisely announces the poem's subject and gives a reading instruction:

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[12] E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an age of anxiety. Some aspects of religious experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine*, Cambridge 1965.

[13] The exegesis of biblical texts is part of this universal need for new modes of interpretation, and itself a powerful agent of the process (as is now documented by the impressive collection of C. Kannengiesser (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 2 vols, Leiden 2004).

[14] See the report on Dracontian research in L. Castagna (ed.), *Studi Draconziani* (1912–1996), Napoli 1997. Some remarks on selected passages (from LD 1) concerning Dracontius' theology and cosmology are in D.J. Nodes, Doctrine and exegesis in biblical latin poetry, Leeds 1993 (ARCA 31) 45–55 and 108–118. Further bibliography also in Muelke (n. 1), an excellent contribution on the hymnic and rhetoric traditions present in the LD is F. Stella, 'Fra retorica e innografia. Sul genere letterario delle Laudes Dei di Draconzio', in: *Philologus* 132 (1988) 258–274. The forthcoming book of R. Simons, *Dracontius und der Mythos. Christliche Weltsicht und pagane Kultur in der ausgehenden Spätantike*, Stuttgart 2005 (BzA 186) seems to cover also the LD.

[15] Regarding the repetition of *hoc carmen* in LD 1,749 Stella (n. 14) 259 n. 9 points to the encomiastic potential of the didactic opening.

> Whoever wants to get to know the thunderer who is either raging or mild, may read this poem, but he should read it with the heart while his voice utters the words. He will recognize Him, whom the temples of the sky and the walls of heaven adore with veneration as being their creator.[16]

Without resorting to justification by inspiration or invoking the help of God, the poet claims to offer knowledge of God (*scire tonantem*), but it is only the diligent and devoted reader (*mente*) who is promised this true knowledge (*agnoscet*). The initial promise to teach the nature of divine wrath and mercy (*iratus / placidus*) proposes an interesting hermeneutic principle that will be developed throughout the poem:[17] knowledge of God is the basis for interpreting the world because nature and culture, both relating to the creator either obediently or rebelliously, are structured by the same principle that characterizes divine nature.[18] Teaching the nature of God involves explaining human experience as a consequence of human behaviour, obedience and penitence being answered by divine grace, constant sin being answered by divine wrath and causing suffering. The dichotomy of mercy and wrath, expanded by the notion of justice, is applied by the poet as a guiding line for selecting his subject-matter, as a tool of exegesis it allows to defy wrong interpretations of biblical episodes, as a means of ordering the material it provides a thematic coherence behind the heterogeneity of outer appearances,[19] and as an object of contemplation and praise it is put forward to underline the unlimited power of the Christian God.

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[16] LD 1,1–4 *Qui cupit iratum placidumve scire tonantem, / hoc carmen, sed mente legat, dum voce recenset. / Agnoscet quem templa poli, quem moenia caeli / auctorem confessa suum veneranter adorent.* All citations from LD follow the edition of C. Moussy / C. Camus: *Dracontius, Œuvres I: Louanges de Dieu, livres I et II, texte établi, traduit et commenté par Claude Moussy (livre II) et Colette Camus (livre I)*, Paris 1985 and C. Moussy: *Dracontius. Œuvres II: Louanges de dieu, livre III, réparation, texte établi et traduit par Claude Moussy*, Paris 1988.

[17] Cf. W. Speyer (n. 1) 469 who stresses the theological impact of the twofold notion of divine nature and convincingly adduces Lucretius and the tradition of pagan didactic poetry for Dracontius' opening verses. For the repetitions of the dichotomy see e.g. LD 1,10s. *iras / et pia vota dei*; 2,368 *non pietas, non ira dei nos ulla coercet*; 2,502s. *et nobis pietas tamen alma parentis* [Arevalo, Vollmer: *nocenti* Moussy], */ indulgere volens cito quam punire parata*; 2,810 *ira furens pietasque simul.* Nodes (n. 14) 10–20 has paraphrased some of the biblical poets' comments on their intentions ("didactic purpose" and "orthodox intention").

[18] The theological principle is a convincing means of creating coherence, because, according to the poet, it is the true meaning beneath the various contents (LD 1,10 *variis sub casibus*) and offers the universal key to human beings' histories (either individual or collective).

[19] Dracontius' discussion of the relations between God's *iustitia*, *pietas* and *ira* is a

Apart from this didactic purpose as defined in the first verses, it becomes obvious from the following passages (esp. LD 1,29–30) that the guiding concept has a strong apologetic dimension, easily recognizable when tentatively put into the form of a conclusion: divine punishment is always preceded by warnings, those who do not understand the warnings deserve punishment, therefore divine punishment is always just.[20] Good examples of this apologetic tendency are to be found where the poet apparently feels challenged by those features of biblical episodes that contain bitter moments and are in need of apologetic explanation: the claim that God shortened the human life span after original sin is interpreted as an act of mercy because it is better to die earlier after human life has become painful.[21] In the same context Dracontius tries to balance the bitterness of the expulsion from paradise by attaching a praise of the new world's beauty and God's mercy who gave this new world as a possession to mankind.[22] Correspondingly, in the second book, the flood and the destruction of Sodom are narrated in order to illustrate the punishment of the fatal inclination of men to sin,[23] but, at the same time, both episodes are interpreted as acts of divine mercy, because they demonstrate how God distinguishes according to the merits of every individual and gives independently to

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leading concept throughout the poem, often stressing that divine *pietas* prevails over *iustitia* (e.g. LD 1,30–34 [*pietas Dei*] *clade repentina nunquam punire nocentes / assumat: poenam cohibet poenamque minatur, / territa quo dominum possit mens nostra precari / et peccatorum veniam non laesa mereri*; 2, 699 *nescius irarum, monitis non clade coercens*; 703 *plus pius es quam iustus*; 704s. *mitis corrigis omnes / sub pietate bonus*; 706 *et quotiens commotus eris placidissimus extas*; 3,20 *iustitiae monitor, sed plus pietatis amator*).

[20] LD 1,29s. "And because the divine mercy and holiness is moderate through perfection, he never turns to punish the sinners with sudden harm. He holds back the punishment and threatens with it, so that our terrified soul may be able to beg his pardon and obtain condonation without being hurt."

[21] LD 1,555s. *et vitae mors meta datur cum fine malorum. / Magna dei pietas, venia qui temperat iras.*

[22] Dracontius thus changes the place of the biblical command from its original place to the time after the fall: LD 1,571–572 *dominentur ut orbi / et* ***totum*** *quod mundus habet sub iure tenerent.* Instead of elegiac pictures that other Christian writers paint to illustrate the moment of loss and pain, Dracontius delivers an *interpretatio* of the attribute *totum* (LD 1,573–579) that contains hymnic praise of the creation. The decision not to dwell on the desperation and mourning of the loss (cf. the contrasting versions discussed by M. Roberts, 'Creation in Ovid's "Metamorphoses" and the Latin poets of late antiquity', in: *Arethusa* 35 (2002) 403–415) fits into the idea that divine punishment always contains a moment of mercy (developed in the following verses by a celebration of God's trinitarian nature, his eternity, grace and pity).

[23] Cf. LD 2,405 *impia gens hominum scelerum mox vota resumit.*

anyone what he deserves.[24] The apologetic dimension of the general thesis is thus continued into exegetical details, stating that every part of biblical memory underlines the responsibility of human beings for their suffering while God always remained merciful and just.

The full knowledge of God that the opening verses promise to give has to be gained through interpretation, it is only available through knowledge of signs which consequently becomes the prominent theme of LD 1: the poet starts with the legitimate knowledge human beings refuse to acquire, and the core of the book deals with the illegitimate knowledge the first couple tried to get hold of. Dracontius' discussion is thus centred around a problem that is, properly speaking, a semiotic one: while divine knowledge is complete, human knowledge is defective and has to rely on right interpretation of the innumerable signs which God has incorporated into his creation: "Are they (sc. the elements) not exhausting themselves by giving signs through the course of times?"[25] Stars, oceans, animals, dreams—everything talks according to the poet: "what the vicious tongue of man conceals, is spoken out by the beasts, the fish, the ungulates (…)".[26] The poet offers his text as guide to right interpretation, because human incompetence to interpret signs has lead to sin and still leads to it. By stressing malice as a reason of wrong interpretation, Dracontius founds a third main dimension of his text: didactics, apologetics, and confession of sin (either including his own person or accusing others), the latter being the prominent theme in LD 2. All three aspects are based upon the idea that nature and culture alike offer convincing arguments for divine providence and justice, set against human sinfulness that tries to hide truth by false interpretation.

Dracontius justifies his claim that nature and culture alike have to be interpreted as signs by defining semiotics as the necessary consequence of salvation history: first it was the prophets' task to intermediate between God and mankind, then it was Christ's incarnation that revealed the divine will, but now it is divinely guided nature that offers signs (*dare signa*). God always announces the (threatening) future to the

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[24] The idea of distinction is expressed by the opposition between 'common' and 'individual' (*generale—specialis*), cf. LD 2,427s. *Segregat omnipotens merita pro moribus orbis: / non sociant poenae quos non iunxere reatus*. 2,433s. *qualiter ereptus Noe servatur in arca, / nec generale malum sensit specialis ⟨et⟩ hostis* (= Loth as enemy of the Sodomites).

[25] Cf. LD 1,55 *Nonne fatigantur dantes per tempora signa?* (followed by a long list of prodigies).

[26] On cosmic order and the idea of the *natura oboediens* in the LD see W. Speyer: 'Kosmische Mächte im Bibelepos des Dracontius', in: *Philologus* 132 (1988) 275–285.

sinners (LD 1,41 *praemonet ante*), and he "tires the elements by teaching mankind through prodigies and signs".[27] The long introductory part of LD 1, from 1,29 to 1,118, where the creation story begins, develops the principle that every natural or cultural phenomenon can be decoded as a prove of divine mercy and justice (the latter mainly understood as just punishment),[28] and thus claims the universal validity of Christian doctrine as the only true concept of interpretation.[29] The ambitious idea of ordering all categories of human experiences into one system of signs that can be deciphered by one universal code is powerfully opposed to Roman semiotic traditions: Roman pagan culture allowed different, even contradictory modes of interpretation to exist next to each other. Separate interpreting communities (soothsayers, priests, poets, historiographers, grammarians) were each responsible for an object of their own, followed their own interpretative traditions and used their specific methods of decoding signs.[30] The stratified model of independent semiotic streams was not tolerable to Christian doctrine, because divine revelation as documented in the biblical books required a universally valid explanation of all human experiences as part of salvation history.[31]

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[27] The text is badly mutilated and uncertain (see Moussy ad loc.), but the outline of the argument is clear: LD 1,35–36 *ante prophetarum dictis sonuere futura / sed postquam Christus*…, 39 *dare signa reis natura iubetur*; 42 *prodigiis signisque docens elementa fatigat*. It is not the astrological questioning of future events that Dracontius aims at (which in Christian writers is widely condemned [cf. Arweiler (n. 7) 34–35 with n. 81]), yet he goes further than his more cautious colleagues, especially in offering the long catalogue of prodigies, cf. W. Speyer: 'Die Vorzeichen im Bibelgedicht des Dracontius', in: *Geschichte–Tradition–Reflexion. Festschrift für M. Hengel*, hrsg. v. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, P. Schäfer, *Bd. 2: Griechische und Römische Religion*, hrsg. v. H. Cancik, Tübingen 1996, 141–153.

[28] Later on in the first book, the poet blames Adam and Eve for trying to hide their sin and gives a long list of human professions (LD 1,502–518) meant to show the human possibility of obtaining knowledge of the future (cf. 1,524 *ecce genus hominum ventura scire probatur*). M. Roberts (n. 1) 104–106 classified LD as "most extreme example among the biblical poems of the tendency of late antiquity to amplify by enumeration" and cited this catalogue, but the notion of 'main theme' vs. 'digression' is a difficult one when applied to a text that is based upon abstract meanings to be detected beneath various subjects, and that explicitly uses *copia* of evidence as argument.

[29] Actually, warnings are a proof of God's love for mankind (LD 1, 89–91, esp. 90 *qui terret, amat*), and the poet gives a detailed explanation of divine justice that punishes only those sinners who have several times refused to follow the warnings (esp. LD 1, 92–117).

[30] E.g. the allegorical readings of Alexandrian scholars, the juridical literature on casuistic reasoning, Roman literature on augurial explanation etc.

[31] Augustine was one of the first who accepted this challenge to Christian thought, and therefore has been labelled the first semiotician in a modern sense (cf. T. Todorov, *Théories du symbole*, Paris 1977, 34–58).

Looking back to our problem of the text's coherence regarding the subject-matter involved, we may take this Christian need for a systematic semiotic approach that allowed to integrate essentially different phenomena into a unified model of revelation as a new starting point for posing the question, and, in fact, we find that the heterogeneity of contents in the LD is balanced by leading categories, that determine each book of the LD so to create a complementary structure: LD 1 is about knowledge, composed around the central narrative of creation and the fall of man, expanded by cosmological speculation and theological explanation of God and the holy spirit. LD 2 is concerned with memory (being a part of historical knowledge), based on the notion that the crucial turning point in the history of mankind, the original sin, still dominates the readers' presence, as the biblical narratives of the flood and various episodes of punishment amply document. LD 3 is about individual experiences and cultural traditions, especially those transmitted by literature, it covers biblical texts as well as pagan culture and mingles both main sources with theological discussion and moral exhortation.[32] The three books are concentrated upon different categories of human experience (nature, history, culture) and are supposed to complement each other in order to give evidence for the universal validity of the poet's interpretative code: seemingly conflicting cultural, theological and anthropological conceptions can be read as signs that prove divine justice and the necessity of true faith.

Modes of interpretation (I)—Arrangement and exemplarity

Looking for modes of exegesis and interpretation in Dracontius we should keep in mind that every text is the result of previous selective operations. The choice of contents, decisions to accept or reject material, to abbreviate or amplify it, all are interpretative acts as they presuppose the examination of a story's impact and its possible mani-

[32] LD 3 not only culminates in the personal prayer of the speaker as an individual, but is shaped by long galleries of individuals as recorded in mythical, historical or biblical memory. Dracontius discusses models of virtue—such as Brutus, Torquatus, Lucretia (3,323–343)—, gathers arguments against traditional esteem of these figures and dismisses them as inadequate models for the Christian. Exclamation and rhetorical questions underline a polemical tone of the discussion, but the treatment is a serious analysis of cultural values that still merit attention or are to be left behind by a Christian, thus coming near to what Augustine does in his *De civitate Dei*.

pulation according to the writer's strategies.[33] In order to find helpful arguments, the poet becomes himself a reader of texts: he examines biblical episodes for their inherent argumentative forces, reformulates them in order to fit into the chain of illustrative or persuasive topics, and recontextualizes them within the new narrative. In the case of the LD, these interpretative acts are not limited to texts in a proper sense, or to exegetical questions regarding biblical sources, but as, according to Dracontius, nature and culture are equivalent sources of God's revelation to mankind, the poet conceives of his task as *interpres* as covering all kinds of evidence, and he chooses as many examples and images as possible in order to convince the reader.[34] By explicitly pointing to the textuality of evidence, either with polemical intent when citing pagan myth, or in order to stress the authority of biblical evidence, Dracontius underlines the necessity of right interpretation that is guided by true faith and generates true faith itself.[35] Two passages with typical modes of representation in the LD may now be shown more at detail.

Dracontius hardly gives detailed exegesis of the episodes he incorporates into his accounts. Instead, he gathers evidence in order to prove the general thesis that divine mercy may be obtained through penitence, as is illustrated by the embedding of Christ's passion and resurrection into the passage mostly concerned with the Jewish people (LD 2,509–593). With *Expavit Iudaea* (LD 2,509) he starts the account of how the Jewish people reacted fiercely to the deeds of the incarnated Christ and accuses them for having inflicted tortures they themselves would have deserved (2,511–526). But their reaction fortunately has led to the "salutary passion" (LD 2,527 *salutaris passio*) which was followed by the signs at Christ's death and his descent to the underworld

[33] Ancient rhetorical treatises, a basis of the rhetorical education that Dracontius has undergone like most of his fellow writers, offered a detailed set of precepts under the headings of *inventio* and *dispositio*.

[34] Familiar from historiographical writing and popular philosophy is the claim of LD 3,54 *non exempla docent …?*. In LD 3,143 the poet states that it is the greatness of divine revelation that demands literary devices such as examples (*nec nudo sermone decet promittere tanta*).

[35] Cf. the use of textuality as argument in LD 2,145s. *discipuli famulique sui cum tanta per orbem / … fecisse legantur*. 2,577 *legimus innumeras veniam meruisse catervas*. 3,144 *Quid pater Abraham, quid Isac meruisse leguntur?* As marker of a sceptical or polemical position, cf. on Heracles 3,211–214 *clarissimus ille* (ironical) */ Alcides, quem monstra ferunt domuisse nefanda, / qui virtute polos meruisse est dictus et astra / … / si tamen hunc verax per saecula fama locuta est*. Interesting is the use of the long age of the myth (*per saecula*) as argument to weaken the story's credibility.

(2,528–551).[36] The elements of narrative are short and comprehensible only to readers familiar with the gospels,[37] while it takes 23 verses to describe the *planctus naturae* and the reaction of the underworld after the death of Christ. The third day (2,552 *tertius lucifer*) saw the return of Christ as king and his taking place at his father's side (2,553–561).[38] But even after men (note the shift in denotation, the name "Jewish people" was metonymically used for the whole of mankind) had murdered their own creator (2,562s.), God remained merciful as further examples show: Iuda could have earned pardon if he had not been desperate about what he did[39] and we read of numerous Jews who repented and were saved, such as Paulus and Stephanus (2,577–593). Here, as often within the poem, a hymnic passage is attached that functions as exegetical commentary of a special character: right interpretation of biblical evidence necessarily leads to praise of God. The dense net of allusions to numerous biblical texts shows Dracontius' interweaving of separate sources into one, multi-referential texture (*textus*) that is meant to document the harmonic interconnectedness of seemingly separate episodes. Leading ideas such as 'punishment is always just' or 'men do not consider divine warnings' are set up as principles for selection and gathering of different biblical episodes that are additionally interconnected by further hints to biblical subtexts.[40]

The second passage comes from LD 3. An interpretation of Abraham being disposed to sacrifice his son Isaac as example of a felicitous relation between man acting obediently and God showing his

[36] Dracontius designs a complex network of intertexts as he is especially interested in the question of the resurrection of the dead, the patriarchs and the afterlife of the souls, for a first overlook for related texts and sources see Moussy ad loc. The leading idea that even malicious people fulfill divine plans was already present in the expression "affair of God" (LD 2,515 *Dei commercia*).

[37] Elements that denote the development of action are mostly narrowed to single verbs (2,513 (*Iudaea*) *quaerit dolos*, 522–525 *insontem turba reorum* / (…) *cruce verbere ferro* / *affligit letique vias et limina mortis* / *ingerit aeterno*; 527 *passio membra peremit*, / *fecit abire diem*; 553 *redit almus ab umbris*).

[38] The passage is deeply imbued by the Symbola as expressions of faith in the early church as well as by the relevant versets of the Gospels (cf. Moussy ad 2,552).

[39] 2,567–570 *Iuda miser veniam si vel sperare haberet*, / *sed … / credidit infelix nil iam veniale mereri* / *iudicioque suo veniae subtractus abivit*.

[40] E.g. the idea 'faith is rewarded' allows to collect the tales of the infertility of Abraham's wife Sarah and their faith (2,625–658), Tobit and Sara (659–663), David and Bethsabe (664–671), Ezechias and Anna (672–680), followed by an explicit statement on the equal value of Old and New Testament as sources (681–683). Despite the announcement of several counter-examples (684s.), only the incredulity of Zacharias is cited (686–692). On the numerous biblical passages involved cf. Moussy ad loc.

grace (3,99–139) is followed by a theological discussion of the patriarchs' remuneration by eternal life in heaven. Numerous biblical episodes are cited (Abraham, Daniel, the three in the fire oven, Peter), but often reduced to the status of *exempla* which are manufactured according to the poet's argumentative needs and not necessarily in accordance with their sequence in the biblical books. In the majority of cases Dracontius offers a kind of *fabula docet* that, in line with the literary treatment of exemplary lives and traditional tales of the Roman *maiores*, is meant to exhort the reader to imitation. 'Confidence in God' is the link between the deeds of Abraham and the three young men in the fire oven,[41] and similar 'morals' help the poet to build thematic lists which he likes to enliven by variation in compositional structure.[42] The postulated thematic coherence allows to cover seemingly heterogeneous materials, to add one example to another without explanation, and to use the supposed abundance of material as argument underlining the wealth of possible examples.[43] The poet abandons the discussion of biblical examples by stating his inability to cover the complete set of divinely inspired deeds (*miracula*). That not even many years of a long life would suffice to give the full account, serves to confirm the reader's conviction that divine mercy is infinite and helps the poet to justify his selective treatment.[44] He wants to shift to another set of examples (*historias curram*),

[41] LD 3,169–171 *Sed nec solus erat quem spes secura futuri / egregie faceret praesentem temnere vitam. / Ignea tres pueros fornax exceperat* (…).

[42] The tale of the three in the fire oven (LD 3,171–187) is a fully developed narrative including direct speech of the Persian king. In contrast, the immediately following mention of Daniel and the lions consists of a very small narrative part (3,188–190, alluded to in 3,215s. [*sed hic* …] and 3,217 [*ille dei famulus fuerat*]), and a large part of reasoning (LD 3,191–221) which is emotionally coloured by frequent rhetorical questions (3,191 *quis petit* …?. 3,209 *quis, rogo* …?) and centered around synkrisis between the true example of glory brought forth by divine assistance and sceptical and / or polemical accounts of gladiatorial fame, Heracles' fight with the lion and false worship of the bloodstained altar of Diana at Colchis.

[43] E.g. the poet shifts without transitional explanation from the end of the tale of the three in the fire oven to Daniel and the lions (LD 3,188–189 *Saeva Danielem rabies atque ora leonum / non tetigere pium* …), then to the deeds of Petrus (3,222 *Petrus apostolico digne subnixus honore* […]). Especially the device to put the proper name in the first place helps to guide the reader.

[44] LD 3,248–250 *Quid? Si cuncta velim miracula currere sollers, / non mihi sufficient mortalis tempora vitae, / multa licet maneant sub quovis limite longo*. The well-known 'topos' (on its impact on Roman poetics cf. S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext. Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*, Cambridge 1998, 34–47) is carefully designed to fit into the Christian context (the humility of the poet is due to the general human debility [*mortalis vitae*] and he has to acknowledge that God is ineffable).

again acting himself as a reader of texts and announcing a corrective reading of Roman and Greek cultural tradition to anyone who may still be misled by their alleged moral value (*profanus*)[45]—the poet fashions himself as Christian *interpres* who helps the misled pagans to detect the vanity of the old heroes' efforts.[46]

Modes of interpretation (II)—Abundance and interpretatio

Collecting examples and hinting almost casually to isolated episodes is a typical feature of Dracontius' access to biblical and non-biblical books which are treated like a quarry of freely manageable evidence.[47] Dracontius' lining up episodes and figures from different biblical contexts aims at showing their coherence, their exemplarity and parallelism in moral or symbolic terms. This explains his sometimes excessive use of figures of speech such as chiasm, antithesis, paradox and oxymoron to fix the meaning of a given narrative and to summarize the outlines by dichotomically structured *sententiae*, as can be seen in his treatment of the biblical flood.[48] What may disappoint readers who looked for sophisticated exegesis of difficult details, is meant to deliver a memorable 'short-key' to the moral impact an episode shares with other episodes, and to underline their common quality of exhortatory or warning examples. In LD as well as in the *Satisfactio*, Dracontius loves enumeration,[49] and he shares this predilection with contempo-

[45] LD 3,251–257 *sed si forte legat haec carmina nostra profanus / … / historias curram Danaum gentisque Quirini.*

[46] The poet starts his list of male figures in LD 3,322s. (*quae Romanus amor patres implere coegit / dicere si valeam, vero sermone probabo.*) and adds another one (of female figures) from v. 3,468s. (*Sed ne forte viris tantum data verba putentur / et quasi sexus iners …*).

[47] It is the model of Christian didactic literature such as Prudentius' *Hamartigenia* where the use of examples in order to prove a theological position is decisive, but the LD are also firmly located in the rhetorical tradition of *laudes* with their amounting of deeds, as Stella (n. 14) 269–271 has convincingly demonstrated (for some similarities in using examples in Prudentius, Prosper (?) and Avitus cf. Arweiler [n. 7] 40–52).

[48] LD 2,809–811 *Una eademque die populis datur ecce duobus / ira furens pietasque simul: sine nubibus ullis / diluvio periere gravi splendente sereno.*—"See, on one and the same day wild anger and mercy are given to two peoples at the same time: without any clouds they died in the heavy flood while the sky was bright." For other examples see e.g. LD 1,118 *prima dies nam lucis erat, mors una tenebris.* 1,545 *et vitae mortisque simul sententia fertur.* 2,174s. *via prisca salutis / semita mortis erat nec servans membra sepulcro.*

[49] F. Clover, 'The Symbiosis of Romans and Vandals in Africa', in: E. Chrysos / A. Schwarcz (eds.), *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, Wien / Köln 1989, 64 (on Drac. see 62–66) points to the list of figures who were renowned for their willingness to forgive (David,

rary writers. In order to acknowledge the interpretative value of this compositional device, we should keep in mind that *interpretatio* was not only discussed in ancient rhetoric, law, and poetics,[50] and as meaning "translation" had special relevance within biblical hermeneutics,[51] but that ancient grammarians and rhetoricians denoted by *interpretatio* the strategy of extracting as many aspects as possible from a single phenomenon and representing them by enumeration.[52] Therefore, extensive circumscription by catalogues and accumulation of elements (*congeries*) exceeds the quality of a mere linguistic feature and can be used as an instrument of *interpretatio* meant to convince the reader, a means whose prominence in the LD becomes already clear from the prologue (LD 1,1–28).[53]

This notion of *interpretatio* as a device that combines linguistic representation with argumentative strategies allows us to reassess also other features of the text. Dracontius uses seemingly worn out rhetoric formulae such as *ne plura loquar* to end listings of concrete examples by introducing a summary praise; he uses hyperbolic features such as *milia sunt* to underline the impossibility of human language and the futility of any trial to adequately express divine mercy by human language.[54] Emphasis lies upon the overwhelming wealth of documentation of God's presence in nature and history that is accessible when interpreted in the right way. Miracle episodes from the Gospels are

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Solomon, martyr Stephen) and the following one of emperors who showed *clementia* (Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, Titus, Commodus Augustus), both in the *satisfactio* (vv. 151–174 and 175–190).

[50] On the different fields of ancient discussions see O. Zwierlein, "Interpretation' in Antike und Mittelalter', in: G. Funke–A. Riethmüller–O. Zwierlein, *Interpretation*, Stuttgart 1998 (Abh. Akad. Mainz 1998, Nr. 6), 31–53. M. Fuhrmann, 'Interpretatio', in: *Sympotica Franz Wieacker*, Göttingen 1968, 80–110.

[51] Cf. the famous *epist.* 57 *ad Pammachium* of Gerome, the *liber de optimo genere interpretandi* (ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, Leiden 1980).

[52] Roberts (n. 1) 155–160 has given ample evidence of the different types of *interpretatio* in biblical poetry. He rightly defines it as an 'expanded syntactical structure' belonging to the type of 'theme and variation' (Roberts 156–157) which combines amplifying paraphrase with (often moral) interpretation.

[53] Cf. the asyndetic lists in vv. 1,5–8 and 13–17, the careful distribution according to categories (cosmic phenomena, then conditions of life and affects) and a summarizing verse signalling the end of the catalogue LD 1,18–19 *Omnia quae veniunt, bona gaudia tristia saeva, / descendunt ex arce dei.*

[54] E.g. LD 2,143 ***milia*** *virtutum sunt admiranda*; 3,524–526 ***Milia*** *femineis numerantur ubique catervis* / ***exempla*** *scelerorum, modicae vel laudis amore* / ***aut certe*** *fecere pie pro numine vano*; 3,681–683 *Quod vetus atque novum, duo testamenta loquuntur* / ***milia*** *tot subito veniam meruisse reorum, / pro quibus una semel vox est aut nulla precata.*

abbreviated, often limited to elliptic allusions that delight the reader who is able to decode the skilful reminder, and ordered according to thematic coherences (such as healing mental diseases, parts of the body or the whole one by resurrection from death).[55] Enumerations sketch wide spaces that through their being necessarily incomplete aptly prove the abundance (*copia*) of divine mercy and thus serve to convince and exhort the reader to worship.[56] Real abundance of mercy or sin is represented on a linguistic level, the subject of the text thus being repeated in its compositional form, and at the same time the catalogue is part of the poet's sceptical attitude in front of his own task: the necessary incompleteness of his trying to list all the evidence reinforces the notion that the text cannot cope with what it pretends to do.

Within the limited scope of this essay, it can finally only be hinted at that poetic techniques of intra- and intertextual imitation and engagement with subtexts are fundamental means of interpretation,[57] especially where, as is the case in Dracontius' imitation of his own account of creation in order to illustrate the completeness of Christ's incarnation,[58] other texts help to unfold a special aspect of the narrated events. Poetic language as developed by literary traditions, is employed by Dracontius in much the same way as imitation, i.e. to convince the reader

[55] The catalogue shows the abbreviated, but often carefully designed structures of alluding to biblical episodes (cf. LD 2,117s. healing of mental diseases; 119s. diseases of the body; 121s. resurrection of the dead; 123–128 healing of a part—blinds learn to see; 129–135 healing of the whole—the resurrection of Lazarus; 136a fever diseases; 136b–139 calming of the storm and Peter walking on the sea; 140s. transformation of water into wine; 142 multiplication of bread).

[56] Cf. Stella (n. 14) 271 on the thematic arrangement of examples: "è direttamente interessata a celebrare la generosità del perdono divino nello stesso modo in cui le aretalogie degli inni esaltavano del dio invocato la qualità o il potere di cui in particolare richiedevano l'aiuto e l'intervento." (with reference to Smolak [n. 1] 394).

[57] The importance of pagan subtexts as means of interpretation in biblical poetry that reaches far beyond simple employment of coined expressions has been underlined by recent research (e.g. W. Evenepoel, 'Dracontius, De laudibus Dei, I 329/458: Adam and Eve before the fall', in: *Panchaia. Festschrift für K. Thraede*, hrsg. v. M. Wacht, JbAC Ergänzungsbände 22, Münster 1995, 91–101; Arweiler [n. 7] 249–346 on Avitus).

[58] Compare LD 2,80–87a. *fitque deus post templa poli sub carne* ***figura / passibilis***, *mortalis homo sine fine perennis. / Et tenuis per cuncta vapor iam mollior igni / irrepsit tenerumque parat per viscera corpus. / induitur compage deus, structura ligatur /* ***ossibus*** *et nervis, pinguescunt intro* ***medullae***, */ hinc cruor, hinc* ***humor***, ***solidatur musculus*** *omnis / et caro* ***plasmatur*** with LD 1,235s. (of animals) *in corpus* ***solidantur*** *aquae nervique ligantur. /* ***musculus humor*** *erat, fluctus durescit in* ***ossa***; 1,336–338 (of human beings) (*auctor*) ***plasmavit*** *per membra virum de pulvere factum. / Limus adhuc deformis erat, membratur in artus /* ***corporeus***, *species hominis, caelestis imago*; 1,340 *spiritus infusus subito per* ***membra*** *cucurrit*; 1,343–344 *iam cutis est qui pulvis erat, iam terra* ***medullas / ossibus*** *includit.*

and arouse different affects that reinforce the arguments, thus coming near to the rhetorical analysis of handling emotions in accordance with the respective subjects. When describing the death of Judas, the poet makes use of drastic vocabulary in order to enhance the readers' hatred against crime and prevent them from feeling pity for someone who has inflicted punishment on himself.[59] But it is especially the continuous alternation of tone, shifting between narrative, descriptive, exegetical or hymnodic passages, that, besides creating pleasure of reading by variation, becomes an obvious part of the poet's argumentative strategy. Threatening or comforting the reader, making him 'feel' what he is taught by compositional and linguistic variation,[60] is a strong means of exhortation, and still part of an exegetical proposal.

Interpreting past as presence—Enacting 'our' history in the LD

Time structure is a central theme for the Christian theoreticians of salvation history, because the past not only explains how things developed, but is a figure of the contemporary world, in Dracontian terms: what we see in history is the model of our life, its contemplation is meant to deter from sin and encourage conversion. Memory, as conceived of by Augustine's *conf.* 10, is a constitutive dimension of the human soul, and it shows the way to listening to God's voice despite the separation from God that characterizes the history of mankind. A typical poetic means for documenting the need for memory is to create intratextual memories: When giving the account of the countless crimes that form the body of human history, Dracontius interrupts his narrative and looks back to his own account of creation in LD 1: "For, if man, our forefather, had been made in the way the birds were made …".[61] This thought that repeats the idea of fundamental difference between mankind and the rest of creation introduces a sort of surreal ekphrasis.

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[59] See the strong emphasis through alliterations and the Neronian color of the description of anatomical detail in dying LD 2,574–576 *Vincula rumpuntur, cecidit crepuitque cadaver, / viscera fusa iacent, hinc cor crudele patescit / funestatque diem de corpore tabe madenti.*

[60] See e.g. the threatening vision of the world's *reductio ad nihilum* that in LD 2 is developped out of the notion of God's powerful act of creation *ex nihilo* (2,201–207) and contrasted by the following, in itself neatly structured picture of cosmic harmony, reaching in more than thirty verses from the angels realm to elements, plants and animals (2,208–240): the reader is first threatened, then soothed and exhorted to avoid just punishment by faithful life.

[61] LD 2,440–441 *nam sic factus homo fuerat, primordia nostra / ut volucres* ….

Twenty-three verses depict paradise, using details that were deliberately left out from the first narration of book one, but, as paradise is lost, its features emerge only from the imagination of a world fundamentally different from human experience nowadays (*proscinderet, deposceret, iret, ferret, darent, sudaret* etc.). The tone of this memorial ekphrasis is sentimental, and it illustrates the careful handling of patterns of time in the LD: while the beauty of paradise in LD 1 was not so much a fact of the past, but of an imaginary, hopeful present of the beginnings of creation, LD 2 is dominated by the loss of this presence that irrevocably has become past: chronology was not intended by the creator who put men into a paradise without time, but past as loss has been caused by human sin and now dominates life on earth.[62]

If the fall of man was the crucial turning point that brought 'history' into being, it was, according to LD 2, the human refusal to understand divine warnings that is responsible for the continuation of doom. Dracontius constructs history as a chain of fatal misinterpretations, that is based on the idea (proposed in LD 1) that responsibility for human suffering is with the suffering themselves. The flood, the destruction of Sodom or the punishment of the rebellious angels should have led us to penitence, but wrong reading of the episodes, as put forward by heretical thinking, caused us to commit even worse transgressions of divine laws and therefore we were justly punished.[63] The interesting point here is the use of the first person plural that includes the poet and his readers into the account of history, and, as we can see in several instances, it is the different denotations of "We" that Dracontius uses as a persuasive means to put forward a remarkable interpretation of the biblical past as presence of his contemporary readers. Denotations of the first person plural change throughout the poem. One function of *nos* is the inclusion of the readers into a community of faith, as is the case when the poet states "we hope for the blessings of eternal life", thus building an exclusive identity that distances the adherents to orthodox faith from pagans or heretics.[64] Another function of *nos* can be discerned in the

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[62] On a stilistic level, the harsh *at nunc* that marks the end of the melancholic retrospection, is meant to draw the line even clearer between poetic memory and the following accusing passages adressed to contemporaries (LD 2,464s. *at nunc plectibiles humanae mentis ubique / dulcia subducunt mores et amara ministrant*).

[63] LD 2,484–486 *Militiae pars tanta poli distincta severe / debuerat nostros ultro compescere mores, / et tamen in nobis nullus timor extitit umquam.*

[64] Cf. LD 3,149 ***nos*** *munera pacis amantes*; 3,467 *quae nos aeternae* ***speramus*** *munera vitae*; 1,683s. *Tot simul exemplis moniti defuncta renasci /* ***credamus*** *virtute dei* (this last exam-

frequent passages of LD 2 where the speaker includes the readers into a movement of confession and self-deprecation. The structuring opposition between the divine *tu* and the human *nos* tends to form a sharp contrast, and LD 2 evidently stresses just punishment of an incorrigible humankind, rarely giving place to consolation.[65]

As representative spokesman of the fallen mankind the poet professes the only legitimate way of interpreting history: doomed by original sin, men have refuted divine mercy. 'We' know where all the evil comes from: "it is given for our crimes, because we all detest the laws of God".[66] The first person involves the readers in the confession the poet performs, and he encourages them to join him through frequent use of rhetorical questions, exclamations and expressive modes that arouse emotional participation.[67] With impressive emphasis, the reader is taken right into the burning Sodom when the poet interrupts his narrative of the biblical episode for an exclamation that accuses not the inhabitants of the burning city but his contemporary readers, thus re-enacting the threatening past in order to amend the readers' morals.[68] These strategies aim at a retelling of the past as present that uses biblical memory as a symbol of the present state of humankind and as a glimpse of the future that awaits those who do not follow the proposed Christian faith. This 're-presentation' of the biblical past shows the permanence of divine mercy on the one hand, of human sinfulness on the other, both being a convincing argument for penitence and a moral change in the presence. The exegetical dimension is concentrated on (or reduced to) a moral exhortation that, according to the poet, presupposes the capacity to read biblical texts correctly, which in turn means a refusal of wrong interpretations. Dracontius

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ple shows how the inclusive *nos* is developed out of a line of argumentation that was meant to refute conflicting interpretations of the resurrection of the dead).

[65] E.g. in LD 2,501–504 ***Est nobis contemptus*** *atrox animique nocentes / omnibus*; ***et nobis pietas*** *tamen alma parentis* [ed. Vollmer], */ indulgere volens cito quam punire parata, / misit ab arce pium caeli per sidera Christum* (…).

[66] LD 2,245–247 *Sed* ***nos*** *quoque rei cognoscimus omnia, quae res / fecerit ista dari: data sunt per crimina* ***nostra***, */ quod praecepta dei passim* ***contemnimus*** *omnes*.

[67] E.g. LD 2,271s. *Non pudet hoc homines? gens importuna probamur / iustitiam retinente fera; pro dedecus ingens*!—"Does mankind not feel shame about this? We are proven to be a corrupt race while the beasts observe justice! What an immense shame!".

[68] 2,424–426 *Nos sumus auctores nostris, heu, cladibus; omnes / pauperiem gemitus mortem tormenta dolores / nos nobis facimus peccando sponte maligne*.—"We are authors of our own ruin; everything—poverty, weeping, death, tortures, pain—we are creating this for us by maliciously sinning out of free decision".

has integrated various 'wrong' interpretations into the LD, and this integration of 'wrong' readings makes, our last point here, the LD a highly performative text, as some examples may illustrate.

Discussions of interpretative problems are dramatically enacted throughout the poem by using a great variety of figures of speech. Dracontius addresses God when defending the existence of evil: "You could have done as follows …", then taking the place of his virtual interlocutor, this time God himself, with the claim that human reasoning is inferior to divine wisdom and the actual creation reveals itself as superior (*sed maior habetur / hic ratio* …).[69] The misled interpretation of evil as argument against divine justice and benevolence becomes, by means of the poet's explicit intervention, a cause for praise. A similar stylistic device shows that these explanations of divine intentions ultimately sustain the poet-figure's authority to interpret biblical memories and solve exegetical problems: after having given a direct speech of God who decides to create a *coniunx* for the lonely first man, the poet self-confidently introduces his comment on God's / his own speech by "as if God had said …".[70] The exegetical comment on what is meant by divine decisions as reported in the Genesis account is a reformulation of what the poet himself had God made say (consequently meaning "as if I had said").

The incorporation of direct speech attributed to anonymous opponents or some 'curious' interlocutor helps to introduce new lines of arguments and dramatizes the reasoning.[71] The dialogic nature of the text is constantly underlined by instances of incorporated speech of opponents whose vain counter-arguments are refuted by the poet's authoritative voice,[72] and in the case of a fully developed dialogue about the angels' fall we encounter the declaration of what the poet

[69] Cf. LD 2,241–244 *Auctorem vitae gaudet stridore minaci / materies laudare necis poterasque, creator, / non angues, non omne nocens permittere nasci, / ut vitas hominum tantum mors una tulisset.* LD 2,718–724 *Et poteras servare malos pius usque senectam / … sed maior habetur / hic ratio, nam impune diu peccare nocentum / si fuerit permissa manus* (…).

[70] LD 1,362 *tamquam si diceret auctor:*… (followed by an explanation of the concept of marriage as—according to the exegete Dracontius—it was actually meant by God in LD 1,363–370).

[71] In these cases the distribution of the different parts is sometimes difficult to decide, as in LD 1,47–52 (Moussy [n. 16] gives vv. 48 and 50s. to the interlocutor while it seems better to limit the intervention to v. 49), cf. 2,273–277 (where corruption of the text may be the cause, cf. Moussy [n. 16] ad vv. 2,275–288 [p. 348s.] "La suite des arguments dans ce passage n'est pas évidente").

[72] Ways of incorporation vary in order to highlight the weakness of the supposed

sees as his task within these discussions: perhaps some people object (LD 2,466 *Forsitan opponant homines*) that even the angels sinned despite their immediate contact to divine presence. This introduction is followed by the full argument given in direct speech (LD 2,469–473) and the poet's announcement to refute this interpretation (2,474 *Sic vobis responsa dabo*).[73]

The term *responsa dare* is programmatic: the poet proposes his text as an answer to questions of interpretation and uses his authority to defend the right faith against opponents.[74] Polemic becomes dominant where the poet reports heretical objections and accuses his opponents of malignity and stupidity, underlining again his claim to give definite answers (*haec illum responsa domant faciantque silere*).[75] These sharp interventions of the poet are meant to condemn differing attitudes, to round up discussion, and are counterbalanced by statements of true faith that draw the positive conclusion on a chosen topic.[76] The changes between consolation, confession, exhortation, vituperation and polemics that characterize the first person's interventions in a text that enacts contemporary discussions on exegetical and theological issues correspond

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adversaries' arguments, cf. the unmarked citation of someone who puts forward ignorance as an excuse for human sinfulness (LD 2,275s.).

[73] LD 2,466–475 *Forsitan opponant homines delicta fatendo, / angelicum peccasse genus, quos purior aer / et super astra polus vel caeli regna tenebant*: / "*Ante tribunal erant, ubi casta et sancta viderent/ corporis expertes terreni ponderis omnes / et sic error eos tenuit crimenque nefandum. / Quid homines miseri, fragili sub tegmine carnis / captivos quos membra tenent et corporis usus?*" / *Sic vobis responsa dabo: Quid culpa aliena / obicitur?* (…)

[74] It is obviously exegetical prose and theological treatise, especially those of *quaestiones et responsiones*, that inspire Dracontius' language (cf. some parallels chosen at random from Augustine's 'exegetical' books in the *confessiones*: Aug. *conf.* 11,12,14 *Ecce respondeo dicenti … Respondeo non illud, quod quidam respondisse perhibetur*; 11,30,40 *nec patiar quaestiones hominum, qui … dicunt*: (…); 12,14,17 "*non", inquiunt, "hoc voluit in his verbis intellegi spiritus dei …" quibus ego te arbitro, deus omnium nostrum, ita respondeo*).

[75] See the famous anti-Arian polemics in LD 2,98–101 (following the interpunctuation of Vollmer) *"Ergo ubi corporeos artus dominator et auctor / induit, et caelum patri servire reliquit, / ut putat—". Insipiens omnis rationis egenus, / nam quicumque sapit, novit, quia sic tulit artus…* (this leads to theological explanations of the trinitarian nature and incarnation [men tend to rely on their eyes more than on what they are told]). LD 3,150–156 *Subiciat quisquam: "Sanctorum vera propago / pacis amatores merito iusteque creavit; / numquid et inmites, qui gaudent sanguine fuso, / debuerat proferre simul feritate cruentos?" / Haec illum responsa domant faciantque silere: / non agnoscit iners animi, rationis egenus, / tempora quod* (…). The intervention marks the end of a passage that demonstrated the direct descent of Christians from Jacob and leads to a new subject. This type of incorporated discourse serves as a means of thematic change on the level of textual organization.

[76] E.g. in yet another instance of inclusive 'we' in LD 2,115–116 *Credimus inde deum mundo venisse videndum, / ut faceret virtutis opus per mille catervas*.

to the intensity in the search for appropriate solutions to the time's struggles for valid modes of interpretation.

Interpreting language: Silence and the (im)possibility of Christian poetry

As we have seen, interpretation is a matter of language and choice of words that may or may not (in the case of the poet's adversaries) reveal the meaning behind a (non-) verbal sign. But Dracontius does not only see human language as susceptible to sin, but as being itself a source of sin, and therefore dangerous. The prominent introduction of the opposition between heart and voice in the prologue to LD 1 is expanded into a general mistrust concerning language as a possible means of conveying Christian truth through all three books of LD. Dracontius could draw on several sources that addressed the morally problematic distinction between what men express by language and what they may conceal in their hearts, among them ancient rhetoric where this question was crucial.[77] Another important source of Dracontius' idea of true interpretation of a text based on the irreplaceable 'intellectual' qualities of the soul are reading instructions from exegetical writing, especially on the psalms: understanding the text presupposes the reader's inner participation and the true meaning of the words is only accessible through the opening of the heart.[78] This Christian concept that an immediate contact between man and his creator is not only possible, but even necessary, poses a serious problem to the poet whose task depends on words, and Dracontius has developed an impressive solution to the inherent impossibility of his task by including it into the composition of the LD: prepared by several instances where human language is criticized for its inappropriateness, the composition of the work culminates in the final prayer of LD 3 that enacts the immediate, interior, 'wordless' dialogue between the poet and God, and thus mirrors the idea where interpretation has to be brought to.

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[77] From Plato's *Gorgias* onwards, adversaries of the rhetoricians pointed to the innate falseness of oratorial arts, and it was the deceptive opposition between *mens* and *lingua* as a means of polemics that Aristoteles and Cicero had tried to overcome (cf. the picture of Scaevola as representative of this old prejudice in Cic. *de orat.* 1,35–38).

[78] Still another opposition is the Pauline antithesis between letter and spirit that opened the way for the Christian hermeneutics of the Old Testament (2 Cor. 3,6). The impact on life is affirmed in LD 3,544s. *nos ergo fideles / vivere debuimus tamquam factoris imago*.

Dracontius deals with the problem of human language on several occasions, and we can start with its incorporation into the account of the fall of man, which again illustrates the free treatment of biblical episodes. When describing the invention of shame by Adam and Eve who have eaten the forbidden fruit, the poet accuses them of stupidity: instead of realizing that it was tongue and ears that made seduction by evil possible, they cover their sexual organs.[79] Instead of explaining the divine providence in making men feel shame about the genitals, or giving an allegorization, the poet takes the story as a narrative that demonstrates the inability of human beings to react aptly to their own sinful behaviour. He claims that the first men's reaction misinterpreted the conditions that led to sin, that it was language and words which ultimately made evil come into being.[80] The moral failure of the first couple that is continued throughout the history of mankind (as depicted in LD 2) has its seeds in the corrupt use of speech, and this is the very nature of human language as opposed to God's salutary words: while human language is prone to invent false deities and favours sinful behaviour, divine speech is to be praised for its creative power and the manifold ways by which it offers mercy to human beings.[81] Towards the end of the poem, Dracontius makes clear where the dangerous misuse of human language has led: pagan error was built upon vain rhetoric, and it conflated empty words in order to create false deities, while the true Christian God cannot be influenced by human speech: "This is the true God, about whom nothing is invented, who is not touched by any false tale, whom words of an eloquent man never increase nor indicate".[82]

The statement of the superiority of divine nature that exceeds the capacity of human language had already been expressed in the first personal prayer at the end of book one (LD 1,747–754), where Dracontius complements the opposition between *mens / cor* and *vox / lingua* by making confession a condition of sincerity: who wants to talk to God

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[79] Cf. LD 1,489s. *os, aditus mortis quam protulit atque recepit / lingua suada mali, sed et aures limina mortis*.

[80] Roberts (n. 1) 148 has underlined the importance of Dracontius' use of *sermo / verbum* in this context as a means of establishing a typological relationship between Eve and Mary, the latter's impregnation being carried out through the entering of the word through the ear (LD 2,89 *qualiter aure deus, verbo fetante marito*).

[81] Moussy / Camus ad LD 1,566 point to LD 2,59. 3,351. 3,548 and Ps. 32,9.

[82] LD 3,533–535 *Ecce deus verus, de quo nil fingitur, in quem / fabula nulla cadit, quem numquam verba diserti / exornant aut forte notant.*

with a pure heart (*mens pura*), has to become aware of his being a sinner (*mens rea*).[83] A key term within the first prayer is *obses sermo*, because it hints to the immediate presence of God as expressed later in the poem: "Because the heavens, lands, ocean and air could not comprise you, you take place in the modest heart of a human breast, received by a faithful mind".[84] Faith is the ultimate source of the individual's (the poet's) speech, stressing that it is not man who enables himself to speak the truth, but it is confession that opens the way for God to speak from the interior of man. Because Christian poetry has to be worship that is independent from the words employed, the idea of the *mens pura* serves as a criterion for discerning between right and wrong worshipping, separating the wrong attitudes towards divine service as put forward by pagan interpretations from the true Christian notion of what God means to mankind.[85]

Yet, as the programmatic impact of the term *respondere* mentioned above indicates, language is necessary to communicate with other human beings about questions of right faith, but it is not necessary when communicating with God, because silent dialogue is not obscured by the ambiguities of human speech. Dracontius stresses the idea that God listens to silent prayer, and because he knows the pure mind of the confessing sinner, human speech is made superfluous by a faithful heart.[86]

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[83] LD 1,747–754 *Aspice despectum, deiectum attolle parumper / confusumque iuva, quia paentitet esse nocentem, / ut valeam memorare tuas hoc carmine laudes, / quas potero (nam nemo valet narrare creatus / vel modicum facientis opus), quod mens rea clamat / pectore contuso lacrimans et voce fideli; / obses sermo tuus nostro nam corde tenetur, / quo te promittis nimia pietate parentem.* This prayer is the Dracontian substitute of an invocation of the Muses at the beginning of pagan poems, and it determines exactly what relation between God and the poet has to be observed: praising the lord through narrating his deeds is an impossible task (*ut valeam memorare … nemo valet narrare*), but writing can be justified if the poet employs *confessio* in its three semantic dimensions of praise (*laudes*), confession of the sins (*despectum, deiectum, confusum, nocentem, mens rea, pectore contuso, lacrimans*) and commitment to faith (*voce fideli, corde tenetur*). For an excellent discussion of this passage (and its connection with the concluding prayer in LD 3) see Stella (n. 14) 259–262.

[84] LD 2, 599–601 *Cum te non caperent caeli terraeque fretumque / aeris et spatium, modico te corde reponis / pectoris humani conceptus mente fideli.*

[85] Cf. LD 1,693 *quem mens pura iuvat hominum, non victima supplex* and 2,753s. *Victima sola placet purgatae mentis honestas, / nec tamen expensis, sed puro corde litandum.*

[86] For silent prayer of a pure heart being superior to speech cf. LD 1,565–569 *nec mens quaecumque praesumpsit pura fefellit, / dictorum effectus non desunt tempore eodem, / penes quem sensu praecordia muta loquuntur / et lingua reticente sonat super aethera sermo / ac mens pura deum potius quam lingua precatur.* LD 2,602 *exaudis quod lingua tacet sub corde loquaci.* 2,615s. *largitur peccata reis sine voce rogatus / pectoris affectu secreto mente fide spe.* A slight variation is to be found in LD 2,761 *effectus faciles oratio pura reportat.* Moussy / Camus ad LD 1,567s. and 2,674 point to parallels in Tertullian (*de oratione* 17,3 *Deus … non vocis, sed cordis auditor*

In the case of Christian poetry this means that talking about God has to be talking to God, and the structure of Dracontius' text represents this ideal form of Christian poetry as an intimate dialogue between the individual and his creator: LD 1 concludes with a first personal prayer, in LD 2 the direct address of God becomes a prominent feature,[87] and LD 3 leads from the inclusive *nos* that the poet uses as representative spokesman of a confessing community to the first person singular as expression of the individual sinner.[88] The final part of the last book presents a summary of the faith professed during the course of the argument, gathering what the poet wants the readers to memorize from his journey through all kinds of evidence, and effectively ends with a personal prayer that shows the poet enacting what he has (theoretically) taught about the necessity of confession. The poet's exemplary personal confession is the last exhortation to his readers, proposing a model of how the message is meant to be imitated in life.[89]

Concluding remarks

Dracontius has embedded exegesis as the interpretation of linguistic signs into the broad horizon of semiotics as interpretation of different categories of signs, hereby (as by the composition of the LD as a whole) following Augustinian doctrine,[90] interpretation of human experience in

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est) and Cyprian (*De oratione domenica* 5 [about Anna] *tacite et modeste intra ipsas pectoris latebras precabatur … loquebatur non voce, sed corde*). Cf. also O. Casel, De philosophorum Graecorum silentio mystico, Giessen 1919 (RGVV 16,2).

[87] Direct adresses of God in LD 2 are: vv. 1–65, 153–164, 182–186 (187–197), 198–244, 594–609, 693–725, 731–740.

[88] LD 3,564–566 *Nec sumus ignari, quid sit fas quidve nefastum: / gens scelerata sumus, nil de pietate merentes, / quorum primus ego plus quam peccator habendus*. The emphatic statement *ecce deus verus* in LD 3,533 (see above) had concluded the last confrontation between the Christian God and false pagan divinities that inspired strife for vain glory, but it also stated the fulfillment of what the poet had promised to give in the first verses of the poem (the preparation of the final section with the first person singular is as careful as in LD 1, leading from a renewed praise of divine power in LD 3,534–546 to direct adress of God in LD 3,547 (*rex pie …*) and the prayer in LD 3,566ss.).

[89] Cf. LD 3,582–585 *Ergo ego confiteor miseranda mente reatum / plenum, grande malum, non uno crimine partum, / nam scelus omne meum numeros superabit harenae / littoris et pelagi vincent mala nostra liquores*. The literary conventionality of the hyperbolic similes reinforces the idea that the 'private' confession of the poet-figure is meant to be an exemplary voice to be imitated by the reader.

[90] I will show some instances of Augustinian influence on the LD in a forthcoming article, on the general relevance (of the *confessiones* in particular) see Stella (n. 14) 265.

the light of Christian faith thus becoming a prominent subject-matter of the LD. If interpretation means finding words to express either the content and meaning of other words, or the meaning of a natural or cultural phenomenon, it is the poet's task to find the appropriate words, and while denying the creative power of human language (which belongs exclusively to divine speech), Dracontius accepts its potential to generate wonder, terror or adoration in order to amend the readers' morals. In order to convince his audience, the poet makes use of topical categories and exemplarity, thus assimilating biblical evidence to evidence from any other source (pagan literature and history, myth, natural philosophy, cosmological speculation etc.), which may be one of the reasons for the exclusion of the LD from the list of 'canonical' biblical poetry.[91] The literary success of this experiment is admirable as it challenges many traditional ways of creating a text's coherence, of combining narrative with reflection and contemplation, and of mixing different topics and modes of speaking. The LD are not subordinated to Holy Scripture, as could be expected from a poetic commentary, but subordinate all subject-matter, biblical or not, to an argumentative structure pre-established by the poet. The first person as constructed by the text performs an intimate dialogue between the divine creator and the confessing sinner, and the poet derives the authority to interpret human experience, including the exegetical problems raised by reading the biblical texts, from this 'personal' experience that enables him to teach, praise or exhort.

[91] See Herzog (n. 4) xxiii–xxv.

EXEGESIS BY DISTORTING PAGAN MYTHS IN CORIPPUS' EPIC POETRY*

Ch.O. Tommasi Moreschini

Nacqui sub Iulio, ancor che fosse tardi
E vissi a Roma sotto 'l buono Augusto
Nel tempo de li dèi falsi e bugiardi[1]

Corippus in Context

The sixth-century grammarian Corippus is considered the most important representative of Latin poetry in North Africa during the Byzantine age and takes his stand at the end of a noteworthy literary line, after which there was no more secular poetry in Africa or, at least, none has survived.[2] His cultivated poetry partly reflects the distinctive patterns of the so-called late antique 'jewelled style', at the same time featuring some typical characteristics of his native country. However, despite a certain revival which Corippus enjoyed most recently, a commentary on the *Iohannis* as a whole is still overdue and the poem still raises many questions.[3] In this article I would like to reconsider and

* I would like to thank Prof. Frederick E. Brenk, S.J., for his careful and thorough revision of the English text.

[1] Dante, *Divina Commedia*, *Inferno*, 1,70–72 ("'Sub Julio' was I born, though it was late, / And lived at Rome under the good Augustus, / During the time of false and lying gods", transl. Longfellow). On this passage, in which Vergil is presenting himself and his poetical career, impugned, however, by pagan faith, see G. Brugnoli, *Studi Danteschi*, I, Pisa 1998, 117–130.

[2] Corippus' two poems have been recently edited by J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear, Cambridge 1970 (the *Iohannis*), and by Av. Cameron, U.J. Stache and S. Antès (the *Laus Iustini*), London 1976, Berlin 1976, and Paris 1981 respectively. An English translation of the *Iohannis* is also available (by G.W. Shea, Lewinston, Queenston, Lampeter 1998). For the sake of convenience I will quote the *Iohannis* according to the text of Diggle and Goodyear, although I do not always agree with their textual choices (far too 'interventionist'). For literary culture in fifth- and sixth-century North Africa see now G. Hays, "*Romuleis Libicisque Litteris*: Fulgentius and the Vandal Renaissance", in A.H. Merrils (ed.), *Vandals, Romans and Berbers. New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, Aldershot 2004, 101–143.

[3] Only single books of this poem have been edited and commented: by M.A. Vin-

discuss some problems involved in Corippus' poetry and in particular the poet's attitude towards mythology and pagan religion. A revisionist and 'exegetical' approach of the way in which Corippus deals with his classical authorities,[4] that is, how he interprets and rearranges his models into a new context, could offer, in my opinion, conclusions of some interest.[5]

In fact, though deeply permeated by a strong Christian ideology, scholars have been reluctant to count Corippus' poetry among 'patristic' literature or to consider it Christian in a strict sense till recent times, because it is wrapped up in an extreme classicising structure and has indeed no parallel in Christian literature or poetry.[6] First of all, the literary genre chosen by the poet, namely the epic hexameter laced with panegyric motifs,[7] and the poetic eulogy of an emperor respectively, found its immediate model in the writings of the pagan court poet Claudian,[8] rather than in the fashionable genres of biblical paraphrase, allegorical poetry, or versified hagiography in which Christian

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chesi (Naples 1983, book one), by V. Zarini (Nancy 1997, book two), and by myself (Florence 2001, book three). A French edition in the CUF series is forthcoming by V. Zarini and I am working on an Italian annotated translation.

[4] See R. Herzog, 'Metapher–Exegese–Mythos. Interpretationen zur Entstehung eines biblischen Mythos in der Literatur der Spätantike', in Id., *Spätantike. Studien zur römischen und lateinisch-christlichen Literatur*, ed. by P. Habermehl, Göttingen 2002, 115–153; 'Exegese–Erbauung–Delectatio. Beiträge zu einer christlichen Poetik der Spätantike', *ibid.*, 155–177.

[5] The monograph by J.U. Andres, *Das Göttliche in der Iohannis des Corippus. Antike Götterwelt und christliche Gottesvorstellung im Wiederstreit?*, Trier 1997, though rich and detailed, lacks a conclusive synthesis. On the same subject see the earlier article by R. Helm, 'Heidnisches und Christliches bei spätlateinischen Dichtern', in *Natalicium. J. Geffcken zum 70. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg 1931, 1–46, esp. 26 ff.

[6] See H. Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?', *VCh* 43 (1989), 361–377.

[7] The hybridization of literary genres is one of the most striking elements of epic poetry during Late Antiquity: cf. J. Fontaine, 'Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du IVe siècle: Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien', in *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'Antiquité tardive en Occident. Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt*, 23, Vandoeuvres Geneva 1977, 425–482; A. Garzya, 'Retorica e realtà nella poesia tardoantica', in *La poesia tardoantica. Atti del V corso della Scuola Superiore di Archeologia e Civiltà Medievali presso il Centro di Cultura Scientifica E. Majorana–Erice 6–12 dicembre 1981*, Messina 1984, 11–49. See now C. Schindler, 'Tradition–Transformation–Innovation: Claudians Panegyriken und das Epos', in W.W. Ehlers–F. Felgentreu–S.M. Wheeler (eds.), *Aetas Claudianea. Eine Tagung an der Freien Universität Berlin vom 28. bis 30. Juni 2002*, Munich–Leipzig 2004, 16–37.

[8] It is worth, however, recalling the examples of Christian panegyrists like Sidonius and, in part, Merobaudes. As far as late antique panegyric production is concerned see now M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power. The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, Leiden–Boston–Köln 1998.

poets had engaged from the fourth century onwards and which can be considered a new kind of Christian epic.[9]

Furthermore, his frequent adaptation of classical turns of phrases was regarded as a disturbing aspect of his poetry, especially since his deep involvement with the pagan epic tradition was judged as something contradictory to original Christian expression. Corippus, in fact, is up to the task of making use of the techniques that his rhetorical education and his profession of *grammaticus* offered him. He displays an enormous accumulation of literary quotations, which range from mechanical echoes to ideologically oriented employments of larger scenes or passages, according to the well-known principle of ancient poetical emulation. On the contrary, he seems less acquainted with the Bible as a source, albeit some passages show reminiscences, mainly from the Psalms or the Gospels.[10] So massive a presence of classical authors may perhaps offer a better understanding of the 'canonical' texts which were read in schools at his time[11] and which were the object of a formal imitation, involving different features, styles, forms, and commonplaces.[12]

Vergil's *Aeneid*, as the interpreters have unanimously emphasized, provided also the guideline for the arrangement and layout of the narrative material. In this sense the *Aeneid* can be considered as the primary 'hypotext'[13] of Corippus' *Iohannis*, and can offer a confirmation of the statement, according to which, writing epic poetry after Vergil

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[9] R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike: Formgeschicte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, Munich 1975; J. Fontaine, *Naissance de la poésie dans l'Occident chrétien*, Paris 1981, ch. 14 and 15; M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquty*, Liverpool 1985. For three paradigmatic examples of this kind of epic transformation see now K. Pollmann, 'The Transformation of the Epic Genre in Christian Late Antiquity', in M.F. Wiles–E.J. Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica*, vol. 36, Papers presented at the 13th International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999, Leuven 2001, pp. 61–75.

[10] See, for example, the direct echoes in 1,151, 5,42, 7,40, 8,215; or the various images of Biblical ascendance (the lion and the dear, the wolf and the sheep at 4,384–387; the grass and the darnel at 2,303–304; the allusion to Ioshua in at 5,522–524).

[11] On the sources of Corippus, see my article 'La Iohannis corippea: ricupero e riscrittura dei modelli classici e cristiani', *Prometheus* 27 (2001), 250–276, with further references.

[12] See the epoch-making essay by E.R. Curtius' *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, Bern 1948; among more recent interpretations, which radically subvert Curtius' perspective, though not the value of his views, see P. Dronke, *Poetic Individuality*, Oxford 1970; D. Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion*, Leiden 1999.

[13] According to the well-known terminology put forward by G. Genette, *Palimpsestes*, Paris 1982.

means rivalling the *Aeneid*. Nevertheless, the imitation of the model is not so slavish, and there are considerable deviations or differences in the structure, which, for the sake of brevity, we cannot sketch out in detail. Finally, the poem possesses an intrinsic and organic coherence, which has been recently outlined in all its complexity in a thorough monograph by Vincent Zarini.[14]

The resulting 'conflation' or 'collision' between classical forms and Christian spirituality represents another example of the widespread criterion of the *chresis* or *iustus usus*, which scholars have long since recognized as a distinctive pattern in late antique and Christian literature.[15] Of course it is not a matter of totally denying the use of mere rhetorical quotations; there can be no doubt, however, of a relevant number of passages in which the presence of heroic colouring is not purely ornamental, but works to suit the new faith. If it is true that for an educated Roman citizen there was no difference indeed between using one literary means or another, an ideologically oriented treatment of classical culture could act as a device to reassert the superiority of the Christian faith. The grammatical-rhetorical phenomena cannot be separated neatly from the ethical-theological ones, because in ancient times the two categories were not quarantined from each other. Religion could represent a counter-hegemonic force which helped to legitimise cultural hegemony.

The classical doctrine of creative imitation (already discussed and put forward, for example, by Quintilian)[16] or, in modern words, of intertextuality[17] was particularly salient in Christian Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. It "rested on a premise that reached far beyond the classics and that joined authors ultimately to God, who was the

[14] V. Zarini, *Rhétorique, poétique, spiritualité: La technique épique de Corippe dans la Johannide*, Turnhout 2003.

[15] I'm referring to the impressive book by C. Gnilka, *Chresis. Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur*, I, *Der Begriff des rechten Gebrauchs*; II, *Kultur und Conversion*, Basel–Stuttgart 1984–1993. See also J. Fontaine, *Étude sur la poésie latine tardive*, Paris 1980; Id., *Naissance de la poésie dans l'Occident chrétien*, Paris 1981, who puts forward the term *reformatio in melius* as the distinctive criterion for Christian poetical emulative practice.

[16] See *Inst. Or.* 10,2,14 and 26. Quintilian's doctrines are discussed by J. Ziolkowski, 'The Highest form of Compliment: Imitatio in Medieval Latin Literature', in J. Marenbon (ed.), *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages. A Festschrift for P. Dronke*, Leiden 2001, 293–307.

[17] For the development of the intertextual method in literary criticism see now the useful handbook by G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, London–New York 2000.

final source of all creativity and the highest object of imitation".[18] Moreover, an authoritative text was to be read and imitated both because of the skill in composition and because of the moral sense that the examples recorded in it would inculcate.[19] This meant a significant transformation of the classical canon and tradition in the reception of antiquity. When late antique poets use their sources, much of their originality consists precisely in the way they adapt what is traditional to their own chosen themes. It is, therefore, possible to understand how thoroughly integrated Christian poetic language could be with the language of Latin epic.

The *Iohannis*, thanks to the complex woof of allusions and intertextual reprises, cannot be taken as a clear-cut or self-enclosed narration, but, on the contrary, the reader is always faced with the other, 'original' text, even though the perception of the imitated text is altered forever by changing the context. Of course, the poet took for granted his audience's knowledge of classical texts, so that the readers could be made aware of the intruding nature of the new verses, or, in other words, compare and contrast the original text with the new contrived situation. Indeed he advertises his use of the models by placing quotations in a conspicuous pattern of clusters and by a pointed use of allusion. Sometimes indebtedness is patently acknowledged, according to the principle of authority, which produced powerful incentives to advertise a borrowing. In this sense it can be affirmed that imitation is a form of commentary. It implies the copying and modifying of a model or *exemplum* and puts the focus on the new version, especially when the text commented upon has canonical status.

The presence of classical authors, far from being negligible or morally neutral, includes a sort of Christian-pagan antagonism. In some way it might be affirmed that Corippus uses "Vergil as a weapon against Vergil".[20] In some way Corippus can be compared to the Christian authors of centos. These practiced a sort of textual adaptation in order to superimpose on a previous structure, a new one, deeply Christianised in content and meaning. This was the only device which could grant 'salvation' to pagan texts and literature.[21]

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[18] Ziolkowski (n. 16), 302–303.

[19] See also A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, London 1984, 112 ff.

[20] M. Smith, *Prudentius Psychomachia: A Reexamination*, Princeton 1976, 236.

[21] See the conclusions put forward by K. Pollmann, 'Jesus Christus und Dionysos: Überlegungen zu dem Euripides-Cento Christus Patiens', *JÖByz* 47 (1997), 87–106.

Finally, since "imitation tends to be affirmative or polemical; it is seldom neutral,"[22] it is on such a re-appropriation of classical authorities that I would like to concentrate. My aim is to outline in its complexity the sharp ideological treatment to which Corippus subjects his models, with particular reference to mythology and paganism. The poet, of course, is not a mythographer, but, because his poetry is so much pervaded by classical idiom, one must ask in what ways his narratives are shaped by the cultural codes and patterns of myth. The significance that pagan allusions could convey, beyond a schoolbook reminiscence or a learned *divertissement* or a nostalgic elitist preservation of the past, has to be found in the broader cultural and artistic context of Late Antiquity, when mythology was subject to a process of moral allegorisation. Furthermore, it has long been noted that pagan themes continue to occur as artistic or literary motifs after the triumph and subsequent conversion of Constantine. By the beginning of the fifth century, "the imagery of pagan myths still maintained its place in the private and public life of the Roman world".[23] The reason can be partly found in the fact that much of this culture was not felt to be religious, but represented a bulk of secular tradition and thus could be shared by both pagans and Christians.[24] In addition, the new Christian intellectuals could transform the nature of the pagan gods by maintaining their essential attributes, in order to symbolise virtues congenial to Christianity. But they could also pervert it, as we shall see, though still keeping the traditional pagan phraseology.

This has been clearly outlined in two recent papers, both dealing with Dracontius, by Isabella Gualandri and Mark Edwards respectively. Dracontius' *Romulea* is, in fact, only apparently a 'pagan' work, and his declaredly Christian poems exhibit a huge and sometimes lavish gathering of classical imagery as well. Gualandri suggests that Dracontius' epyllia are not only witnesses to the valuable inheritance of Roman culture and its diffusion among the African elites, but that their dramatic or gruesome contents testify also to the momentous historical period of Vandal rule, being thus permeated by deep moral instances.[25]

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[22] Ziolkowski (n. 16), 304.

[23] W. Liebeschuetz, 'Pagan mythology in the Christian Empire', *IJCT* 2 (1995), 193–208: 194.

[24] See R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, London 1990.

[25] I. Gualandri, 'Gli dèi duri a morire: temi mitologici nella poesia latina del quinto secolo', in G. Mazzoli–F. Gasti (eds.), *Prospettive sul tardoantico. Atti del Convegno di Pavia (27–28 novembre 1997)*, Como 1999, 49–68.

Edwards, however, argues that Dracontius wrote his mythological tales (some of which are posterior to his imprisonment) as a Christian, in order to demonstrate the futility of mythical and polytheistic teaching, and that he engaged in such different works "because, for him as for many other Africans, there was no bridge to be built between pagan error and Christian truth".[26]

For this reason I will not deal here with the usual—and no more original by Corippus' time—allegorical or metonymical employment of classic gods in order to represent physical and natural phenomena, agricultural elements or moral entities, vices, virtues, desires or inclinations.[27] This technique, first employed by Plato and the Stoics, rose in Late Antiquity to exalted heights. It should be regarded as a manifestation of a cultural tradition stretching from the Hellenistic period to the Renaissance,[28] or as a result of the moralization of religion—so common in Late Antiquity—that tried to remove its flaws. Nor will I consider the increasing habit to use personifications, which from the Flavian age onwards gain a more and more active part in the narrative.[29] It is worth noticing, though, how personification performs a sort of allegorical inversion. Normal allegory attempts to transform the word back into an object and to reify it, whereas a personification seems to represent the unchanging essence of the same abstraction.[30]

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[26] M.J. Edwards, 'Dracontius the African and the Fate of Rome', *Latomus* 63 (2004), 151–160, 158. See also R. Simons, *Dracontius und der Mythos*, Munich–Leipzig 2005.

[27] H. Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung*, Zurich 1945. See, more recently, the collected essays by J. Pépin, *De la philosophie ancienne à la théologie patristique*, London 1986; and the perceptive work of D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*, Princeton 1991. For Stoic and Neoplatonic transformation of Homer into a crypto-philosopher, see R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*, Berkeley 1986. P. Dronke, *Fabula. Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*, Leiden 1974, deals mainly with mythological allegorisation as it was practiced by philosophers in the twelfth century.

[28] This tradition has been outlined in the seminal essay by J. Seznec, *Les survivances des dieux antiques*, London 1939. See also Liebeschuetz (n. 23), 197ff., with further references.

[29] After C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, Oxford 1936, 48ff., see G. Williams, *Change and Decline. Roman Literature in the Early Empire*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1978, 263ff.; C. Gnilka, 'Götter und Dämonen in den Gedichten Claudians', *A&A* 18 (1973), 144–160, esp. 158. As far as Corippus is concerned, see Andres (n. 5), 36–75 and 88–105.

[30] S.G. Nugent, *Allegory and Poetics. The Structure and Imagery of Prudentius' Psychomachia*, Frankfurt 1985.

On the contrary, my purpose is to demonstrate how the poet operates a conscious distortion or swerving away from his sources, which acts from both a stylistic point of view and an ideological one.[31] In addition, it is perhaps possible to suggest that Corippus was inspired in his characterization of classical myths by an exaggerated polemical verve, or using *ad hominem* arguments, which another African writer like Arnobius displays in his work against paganism. Nor can the influence of Augustine be excluded, who likewise criticized with the passion of a recent convert, the fallacious pagan gods (not only the immorality and obscenity of the playwrights, but the epic genre as well, responsible for handling down the lies of mythology).[32]

Beside the standardized charges against the immorality of some mythological tales, in his attacks Augustine first of all focuses on the fact that they possess a despicable aesthetic allure, corrupt society, and, most of all, feature false gods. This is, of course, an old claim, too, which goes back to Plato and Heraclitus and seems to imply a sort of euhemeristic approach towards the pagan divinities. However, it must have sounded intentionally sacrilegious, since the veneration for Vergil in Late Antiquity is well known. Augustine's attack on Vergil comes thus not unexpected, since by his time pagan culture still was a dangerous rival of the new religion and its literature supplied a spiritual refuge for the educated elite. A probable reason for this separation of poetic and exegetical functions lies in the fact that the poetic transformation of exegesis was perceived by Augustine as methodologically and even doctrinally unsound or, combined with its aesthetic appeal, as a potential rival to patristic *auctoritas*.

Augustine, however, admits (by employing the famous example of the Israelites escaping from Egypt with a staggering freight of treasures) the right to take from pagan culture what is useful. Therefore, the gods undergo a radical transformation and acquire a new meaning, which does not affect the religious sphere, but belongs to the objective imagery or knowledge. In this way, different elements of Scripture and

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[31] Very valuable is the article by M. Brooke, '*Interpretatio Christiana*: Imitation and Polemic in late antique Epic', in M. Whitby (ed.), *Homo Viator. Classic Essays for J. Bramble*, Bristol 1987, 285–295, which deals with similar imitations in the works of Pauline of Perigueux.

[32] The following considerations owe much to H. Westra, 'Augustine and Poetic Exegesis', in H. Meynell (ed.), *Grace, Politics and Desire. Essays on Augustine*, Calgary 1990, 87–100. See also the exhaustive monograph by S. MacCormack, *Shadows of Poetry. Vergil in the Mind of Augustine*, Berkeley 1998, esp. ch. 4.

exegesis are connected with each other through pagan imagery and pagan allegory, creating an original representation, but also a rather eclectic remythologisation.

Corippus' Poetical Principles

a. *Allegoresis*

It is surely impossible to demonstrate whether and how much Corippus was influenced by Augustine, but in his attempt at writing a consistent Christian epic he opted for the only possible form of reconciliation between the classic genre of heroic poetry and Christian religion, that is the celebrative praise of a Christian hero—the general John Troglite—and his deeds in the form of an historical epic.

Conversely, Corippus depicts the Berber tribes revolting against the Byzantines as a collective, impersonal entity (besides the two or three main characters), and is always inspired by a radical dualism between good and evil that does not admit shades or exceptions. His representation of the Berbers is extreme and he has set up, in simplistic terms, a 'binary opposition' between the righteous Byzantines and their perfidious adversaries. In describing them Corippus is of course dependent on the widespread cliché in Graeco-Roman literature that underlines Roman superiority. At the same time, as an African himself, the poet is actually well informed about the Berber tribes and is particularly clever in depicting their strange customs. Historians or anthropologists of North Africa have long since recognized the *Iohannis* as a primary and reliable source for Berber customs, warfare, and African topography.[33]

It is perhaps worth noticing how ethnographic narrative, which presents a coherent imagined construct of the other and of its specific differences, is sometimes connected to a certain range of allegorical referents. In other words, it is "sacrificed to a rhetorical function in a literary discourse that is far removed from the indigenous discourse of

[33] Av. Cameron, 'Corippus' Iohannis. Epic of Byzantine Africa', *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983), 167–180. I myself dealt with this perspective in 'Realtà della storia e retorica dell'impero nella Iohannis di Corippo', *Athenaeum* 90 (2002), 161–185, esp. 170ff.

their occurrence".[34] An often ingenuous ethnographer like Corippus, in order to make his message convincing, had to treat the foreign, the strange, the unfamiliar, by employing persuasive rhetorical strategies and to represent weird behaviours as meaningful within a widespread network of codes and a common ground of explicable activity. Since the author stands above those whose experience he purports to portray, his account of the Berber tribes is masked by rhetoric, stereotypes, theatricality, and interpretative capability. The way he describes figures and events is often metaphorical and subverted by the transcending stories in which they are cast. Moreover, as recognized as a standard pattern in late antique reemployment of classics, for Corippus as well the perception of the past is profoundly marked by the concerns of the present.[35]

Religion plays indubitably a main role in such a dualistic opposition, since the final victory of the Byzantines is intended to be the triumph of Christianity over the fallacy of pagan gods. The choice of similes derived from pagan imagery helps to reinforce this powerful ideology and constitutes a significant part of his poetical message. Of course, Corippus resumes the mannerist or, so to say, 'silver Latin' pattern of emphasizing, with increasing exaggeration, the disturbance in nature, and the cosmic quality of some myths, for he often recalls stories like Phaethon's mad course and the Gigantomachy, or focuses his attention on storms, fires and dark sceneries. Nevertheless in the strong ideological connotations of his account and in his way of dealing with previous models Corippus can be considered a proto-medieval author.

Firstly, the poet's intention to separate himself from the ancient mythological tales, which from his Christian point of view he considers falsities, clearly emerges in the employment of parenthetical clauses such as *ut veteres aiunt gentili carmine vates* (1,452),[36] or *carmine non aliter referunt* (6,658), and infinitive sentences that report in indirect speech pagan accounts (see, *e.g.*, 4,323). Furthermore, as far as pagan myths are concerned, the poet seems to employ a certain kind of interpreta-

[34] V. Crapanzano, 'Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description', in J. Clifford–G.E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1986, 51–76: 76 (an interesting approach, but not always acceptable); see also J. Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory', *ibidem*, 98–121.

[35] See the perceptive observation by C. Gnilka (n. 29), 157.

[36] *Gentilis* is the common poetical adjective to designate paganism (cf., *e.g.*, Prud., *Symm.* 1,574; August., *Serm.* 17,6,5). For these and similar formulas see Zarini (n. 14), 118.

tive allegorisation, or—better—allegoresis. He takes a fragment of literal narrative and converts it into a figurative discourse, which is often granted a metaphorical meaning. An allegorical reading of some passages might well show that its literal meaning is in step with the cultural expectations of his contemporaries.

In fact it must be noticed how Corippus most often rearranges a usually long and sometimes erudite narrative digression in a different context by abridging it into a simile. In addition, there is always a conflating of many sources (Claudian and Vergil, or Lucan and Ovid, etc.) in order to provide a skilful literary pastiche. The poet seems aware that metaphor and simile have proved to be weapons in polemical argument, and even tools for creating a special version of history, the one most favourable to the author.[37] In some way it can be affirmed that Corippus converts "literal … metamorphoses into metaphors".[38] In fact, when he has to depict the impious enemies of the Romans, he does not present his allegories in a clear-cut or independent form. Instead he fuses together myths or stories that thus constitute an internalised allegory of those events, in an essentially synthesizing and original way. They seem to create in an original way a sort of "protometamorphosis" which comes very close to the medieval interpretations of Ovidian transformations.[39] Abridgment and compendium of classic sources, together with an insistent interpretative metaphorisation in order to suggest something behind it, are the distinctive patterns characterizing Corippus' dealing with similes and figurative adjustments. There is a strong shuttling between the two verbal levels. This is usually marked by literal plays upon the *comparandum* and the *comparatum*, in order for the simile to recall the main body of the narration.

b. *Substitution and Revaluation*

In obedience to the new canons of both historical and Christian epic, Corippus had to replace a traditional pattern like the *concilium deorum* with other narrative devices. For example in Book I the address delivered by the emperor Justinian, insofar as he is the earthly vicar of God,

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[37] C.G. Leidl, 'Metaphor and Literary Criticism', in G.R. Boys-Stones (ed.), *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition. Ancient Thought and Modern Revisions*, Oxford 2003, 29–54, esp. 47.

[38] J. Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, Oxford 1993, 191.

[39] According to L. Barkan, *The Gods made Flesh. Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism*, New Haven 1986, 20. See also ch. 3.

is modelled on Jupiter's prophetic discourse in *Aeneid* I. Nevertheless, the poet does not renounce inserting a strikingly modified council of the gods. In an impressive simile Corippus compares the assembling of Moorish officials before a crucial battle to the Furies and the infernal monsters summoned by the King of Underworld (4,319–332):

> *tunc evocat ille rebelles*
> *voce ciens: cursu rapido Maurusia turba*
> *confluit, et nigrae facies tentoria complent*:
> *ut quondam Ditem moturum proelia divis*
> *concilium fecisse ferunt et mille per amplas*
> *monstra vias venisse, Hydram tristemque Megaeram,*
> *ac Carona senem deserta currere cumba,*
> *Tisiphonem validam flammis et pondere pinum*
> *quassantem, Alecto tortis saevisse chelydris,*
> *quaeque sub ingenti facies monstrantur Averno.*
> *utque ducem veniens densum circumstetit agmen,*
> *obtulit ipse sedens consessum ex agmine dignis.*
> *ille tamen medius sedit praefectus, et omnes*
> *aspiciens rabido tumidus sic intonat ore.*

The simile features a strong insistence on 'chthonian' and 'demonic' motifs, which the poet often connects to the black colour of the Moors.[40] Thus, the council of the gods becomes an infernal conclave, patently modelled on the famous passage at the beginning of Claudian's *Rape of Proserpina* (1,32–42), as noticed already by Mazzucchelli.[41] Corippus clearly echoes the image of the infernal King, the god Dis, summoning his troops against the celestial gods,[42] and the fury Tisiphone brandishing her torch and uprooting a pine.[43] Other passages, sometimes standardized, however, come to the reader's mind: the Hydra, the helmsman Charon and his raft occur already in Vergil's celebrated underworld section,[44] while the fiery Allecto with the snaky hair seems to be a contamination of both Vergilian and Ovidian imagery, with the euphuistic flosculus *chelydros*.[45] It is worth remembering that Corip-

[40] Even though without racist connotations: see F.M. Snowden, '*Melas-leukos* and *niger-candidus* contrasts in literature', *Ancient History Bull.* 2,3 (1988), 60–64.

[41] Cf. also Statius, *Thebaid* 8,21–33.

[42] 1,32–33: *dux Erebi quondam… / proelias moturus superis.*

[43] 1,39–41: *crinitaque sontibus hydris / Tisiphone quatiens infausto lumine pinum / armatos ad castra vocat pallentia Manes*; but see already Luc., 1,572–574: *ingens urbem cingebat Erinys / excutiens pronam flagranti vertice pinum / stridentisque comas.*

[44] *Aen.* 6,298–304.

[45] Cf., *e.g.*, Verg., *Georg.* 2,214; 3,415; Ov., *Met.* 7,272; among Christian authors see Prud., *Symm.* 1,129; Ennod., *Carm.* 2,44,6. Moreover, expressions like *mille … monstra*

pus shortens the long passage by Claudian, though maintaining some of its distinctive features. Whereas the poet casts off Claudian's acute penetration into the psychology of Dis, and his Ovidian-like humanization of a god, he preserves the vivid, rousing atmosphere and the hurrying confusion of the gods. Moreover, the prominent military note, which Claudian emphasizes just at the beginning by the combination *dux Erebi*—suitable to the imagery of Dis as a general leading an underworld coup—is here directly applied to the Moorish chief Antalas. Scholars have highlighted the large amount of military imagery in the *De Raptu Proserpinae*, a poem that does not contain the prospect of a war. This may reflect the contemporary attitude of the Court of Honorius, which was involved in constant war against the Goths. Therefore, Corippus' transfer is not casual, since he wants to stress the idea of a wrathful and majestic figure. Similarly, Tisiphone is shown in her traditional epic role of giving the signal for warfare, according to traditional imagery, which goes back to the *Aeneid* (6,554–556; 570–572), where she is depicted as keeping watch at the iron tower, in her bloody robe and shaking her whip, but becomes far more prominent in Statius. The fondness for such loathsome creatures as the Furies is testified also by other passages in the *Iohannis*, where Tisiphone or Megaera are closely associated with the imminence of the war (3,80 and 111) and thus represent a personification of it.[46]

Furthermore, it is not casual that this kind of imagery is directly connected with a prophetic scene. In fact another typical epic pattern, the oracular consultation, is inserted twice in the *Iohannis* (3,79–155; 6,145–187). It does not act as pure homage to classical tradition, but, on the contrary, assumes negative shades and plays a structural role in the poem by establishing the major theme of Berber paganism, which is elsewhere emphasized by naming outlandish and strange gods.[47] Surely, Corippus follows in the wake of the Christian tradition,

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and *quaeque … facies* recall the Vergilian description of Allecto (*Aen.* 7,329, *tam saevae facies*) and the summoning of various monsters in Claudian, *In Ruf.* 1,29 and 40.

[46] The two Furies have strong affinities with *Fama*; for she is depicted as a chthonic source of destruction as well. Already in Vergil, the representation of Fame shares some patterns with Allecto. The equation of her with the Dira would have become far more prominent in Silver epic, insofar as both figures were considered female rumourmongers, hellish demons who gave rise to lament and desolation.

[47] See my article 'Persistenze pagane nell'Africa del VI secolo: la Iohannis corippea e la questione dei dii mauri', in M. Marin–C. Moreschini (eds.), *Africa Cristiana. Storia, religione, letteratura*, Brescia 2002, 269–301.

which often transformed pagan divinities into demons or evil sprits and paralleled pagan prophets to possessed people:[48] "this deception by the god of truth may be another example of the Christian poet's view of the old gods. The whole scene shows how little credence should be placed in prophecy, even from the most authoritative source",[49] a statement Corippus reinforces by punning on the ambiguity of the oracular responses. However, the divine *mania* (sometimes described as a sort of rape and / or pregnancy) and the ecstatic trance of the prophetesses were regarded negatively already in classical sources, because of their exaggeration and loss of composure. The vivid description in Corippus' Book III, which is by far the most artistically elaborated one,[50] shares patent patterns with the description of the Delphic priestess in Lucan's *Pharsalia* five and, therefore, may function as a negative example of a religion alien to the Roman state.[51] A skilful tricolon is displayed in the simile that concludes the first section in Corippus' account: the delirious *vates*, her groaning murmurs and hoarse sighs are compared to the forge of Vulcanus under Mount Aetna (ll. 102–105):

> *non aliter primos surgens Vulcanus ad ignes*
> *follibus obductis tumidos concurrere ventos*
> *arte movet, flammasque ciens Eurosque sonantes*
> *asperat, exhaustas renovans fornace procellas.*

Corippus is here much more balanced and quiet, when compared to Lucan's exuberance, for a similar volcanic imagery seals the prediction in *Bell. Civ.* 5,97–101 as well: *hoc ubi virgineo conceptum est pectore numen / humanam feriens animam sonat oraque vatis / solvit, ceu Siculus flammis urguentibus Aetnam / undat apex, Campana fremens ceu saxa vaporat / conditus Inarimes aeterna mole Typhoeus.*

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[48] J. Fontaine, 'Démons et sibylles: la peinture des possédés dans la poésie de Prudence', in *Hommage à J. Bayet*, Brussel 1964, 196–213. Among ancient sources it is worth remembering Tertull., *ad Nat.* 1,36 and 2,8.

[49] D.F. Bright, *The Miniature Epic in Vandal Africa*, London 1987, 100 (in dealing with the fallacy of pagan gods evoked also by Dracontius).

[50] Its skilful structure has already been analysed by V. Zarini, 'Goétique, poétique, politique. Réflexions sur un passage de la Johannide de Coripe (3,79–155)', in J. Dion (ed.), *Culture antique et fanatisme*, Nancy–Paris 1996, 113–140. See also my commentary (n. 3), 127ff.

[51] According to the valuable paper by R. Gordon, 'Religion in the Roman Empire', in M. Beard-J. North (eds.), *Pagan priests: religion and power in the ancient world*, London 1990, 235–255. See also D. O'Higgins, 'Lucan as vates', *CA* 7 (1988), 208–226; Ch. O. Tommasi, 'Lucan's Attitude towards Religion: Stoicism vs. Provincial Cults', in C. Walde (ed.), *Lucan im 21. Jahrhundert*, Munich–Leipzig 2005, 130–154.

Likewise, the poet shows a certain predilection for war-gods or mythical monsters, in order to provide a negative corollary for the impious rage of the Berber tribes. Their rebellion is often compared to the giants who revolted against the order established by Zeus. Of course the struggle of the Olympian gods against monstrous opponents, such as the Titans or the giants, had been very popular in mythology and fitted for describing, in grand and sublime style, the conflict of savagery against civilization, or the opposition between the forces of chaos and *kosmos*, which led to the creation of order and victory over evil.[52] Thus the Gigantomachy theme operated at a religious, moral, political level, and even at a cosmological one, as it is shown in the Stoic allegorisation. Moreover, it was particularly suitable for political ideology and panegyric, and, therefore, "it is found from early times with a transferred function, either in the form of a simple comparison, or of a more fully developed allegory".[53] Besides the famous sculptures of the Parthenon or the Pergamon altar,[54] the theme was largely developed in the Roman anti-barbaric propaganda, as it is testified by many passages in Augustan poets.[55] It became, however, a particularly pervasive and fascinating theme in Late Antiquity, because of the frequent incursions of the Germanic tribes into the Roman Empire. There are constant references in Claudian, who was the author of two *Gigantomachies*, to dark powers and anarchic forces threatening the order of Jupiter.[56]

Corippus, who is concerned with the rebellion of barbarian tribes as well, hints three times at the battle of the gods and giants, in 1,451–459, 5,153–158 and 6,658–660 respectively. The first passage, which we are going to consider, is the more conspicuous and detailed one:[57]

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[52] D.C. Innes, 'Gigantomachy and natural philosophy', *CQ* 29 (1979), 165–171.

[53] P.R. Hardie, 'Some Themes from Gigantomachy in the Aeneid', *Hermes* 111 (1983), 311–326, esp. 311. This paper was rearranged and enlarged in *Virgil's Aeneid. Cosmos and Imperium*, Oxford 1986, 86ff.

[54] F. Vian, *Répertoire des gigantomachies figurées dans l'art grec et romain*, Paris 1951.

[55] See especially Horace, *Carm.* 3,4, and Ovid, *Met.* 1,151–162.

[56] W. Kirsch, 'Claudians Gigantomachie als politisches Gedicht', in H. Scheel (ed.), *Rom und Germanien. Dem Wirken Werner Hartkes gewidmet*, Berlin 1983, 92–98; E. Livrea, 'La Gigantomachia greca di Claudiano: tradizione manoscritta e critica testuale', *Maia* 52 (2000), 415–451. V. Zarini (n. 14), 235, sketches out the affinities between Claudian and Corippus, with reference to figurative arts as well. For gigantic themes in late antique panegyric production see W. Speyer, 'Gigant', *RAC* 10, Stuttgart 1978, 1247–1276, esp. 1255 and 1272, who calls to mind Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 1,5,1 and *Pan. Lat.* 12,44 Gall., and the poetic example of Sidon., *Carm.* 6,7–36 (preface to the panegyric for Avitus); 9,76–93; and elsewhere. See also Prud., *Ham.* 499.

[57] Among the gigantomachic passages, since it stresses the elemental forces of nature,

sic Iuppiter ille,
ut veteres aiunt gentili carmine vates,
saeva Giganteo dum staret Phlegra tumultu,
caelicolum turmas quid vellent fata monebat:
sternere terrigenas posset quo fulminis ictu,
cuspide qua Mavors transfixos funderet artus,
verteret in montes visa quos Gorgone Pallas,
Arcitenens crebris quis ferret fata sagittis,
quosque levis torto fixisset Delia telo.

In this accurate simile the general John is compared to Jupiter throwing his thunder against the conceited Giants. The passage displays many classical reminiscences, which are merging together: if an adjective like *Giganteus* is regularly attested in Latin poetry (always in the second foot of the hexameter), the reference to Phlegra, the speaking-name of the Macedonian land where the Giants were defeated by Jupiter, seems less frequent and perhaps is modelled on Statius, *Achill.* 1,484–490, which has been considered the direct source for the present passage.[58] In addition, *tournures* such as *quis ferret fata* or compounds such as *terrigena* and, most of all, *arcitenens* confer an archaising shade to the whole section. The latter seems a Naevian formation and is quite unusual after the late Republic,[59] while the former is first attested in Lucretius (5,1427) and is usually employed by silver poets.[60] Moreover, Corippus, as usual, omits ekphrastic details, for the sake of abridgement. Namely, he does not mention the traditional monstrous attributes of the Giants (the hundred heads, the snaky feet and their unnatural conception from the blood fallen on the earth after the emasculation of Uranus). Nor does he directly apply the usual association put forward by Christian writers with various biblical types of the proud and presumptuous (the tower of Babel, Nimrod, or the rebel Lucifer).[61]

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should be counted also 5,395–397, *horrificos veluti cum Iuppiter excitat ignes / aethere commoto, et tonitru conterritat orbis / omne genus fractisque tremunt praecordia nimbis*—a simile which introduces the first day of the battle between Romans and Moors: Andres (n. 5), 32–33.

[58] *Sic cum pallentes Phlegraea in castra coirent / caelicolae iamque Odrysiam Gradivus in hastam / surgeret et Libycos Tritonia tolleret angues / ingentemque manu curvaret Delius arcum / stabat anhela metu solum Natura Tonantem / respiciens: quando ille hiemes tonitrusque vocaret / nubibus, igniferam quot fulmina posceret Aetnen.* See, however, also the striking parallel in Claud., *De rapt.* 2,255, *cum … saeviret Phlegra tumultu.*

[59] Ov., *Met.* 1,441 (Phoebus killing Python); Stat., *Ach.* 1,682; Sidon., *Carm.* 1,7 and 23,266.

[60] Ovid (*Met.* 5, 325), Lucan (3, 316); Sil. (9,306).

[61] Speyer (n. 56), 1259ff.; Herzog (n. 4), 115ff.

Conversely, it seems worth noticing the presence of other gods besides Jupiter, insofar as they are representatives of the Olympian order, and, therefore, embodiments of reason, fighting on the side of the legitimacy of Rome. Corippus arranged his sequence by perhaps drawing on the already cited passage in Statius' *Achilleid*, and adding some borrowings from Claudian[62] or Lucan.[63] He may also have had Vergil in mind: although there is no explicit reference to the Gigantomachy in the *Aeneid*, Vergil demonstrates a sensitive use of gigantomachic patterns and provides, as it were, a 'moralization' of that myth, for example when he depicts Minerva, Mars and Apollo combating at Actium against the exotic Egyptian gods (*Aen.* 8,698–706).[64]

Two other examples fall within the same province. The account of the Gigantomachy is replaced by the similar one of two Herculean labours, even though the references of the two episodes correspondingly fit into a wider pattern. In fact, Hercules, many of whose exploits are reminiscent of themes from the Gigantomachy, had been often associated with the gods fighting their monstrous enemies, since an oracle had warned them that they could not kill the Giants without the aid of a mortal. Corippus connects the two main characters and leaders of the Berber troops, namely Antalas and Carcasan, to the legends of the struggle between Hercules and the two monsters Cacus and Antaeus, which are, on the other hand, a paradigm for similar other legendary and historical struggles.

In Book III (156–170) the young 'prince' Antalas performs in a cave a rite of passage from puberty to adult age. This consisted of chopping into pieces and eating raw meat. In a brief but realistic simile, Antalas is explicitly put side by side with the semi-beastial Cacus, the hideous son of Vulcan, who also lived in obscure recesses, rustled cattle, and devoured bloody pieces of meat, until he was finally killed by Hercules:[65]

> *septimus et decimus nascentem sumpserat annus,*
> *cum puer infaustis admouit bracchia furtis.*

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[62] *Carm. Min.* 53,88–89, *si non Mavortia cuspis / ante terebrato cerebrum fudisset ab ore*; 92–93, *Tritonia virgo / prosilit ostendens rutila cum Gorgone pectus*.

[63] See 9,655–658, and, above all, 7,144–150 (also in a warrior simile): *si licet superis hominum conferre labores, / non aliter Phlegra rabidos tollente gigantas / Martius incaluit Siculis incudibus ensis / et rubuit flammis iterum Neptunia cuspis, / spiculaque extenso Paean Pythone recoxit, / Pallas Gorgoneos diffudit in aegida crines, / Pallenaea Iovi mutvit fulmina Cyclops*.

[64] Hardie (n. 53), 321.

[65] For a detailed analysis of the verses see my commentary (n. 3), 171ff.

Cacus ut Herculeis cariturus luce lacertis
noctis itus metuendus init, raptumque retraxit
ductorem patremque gregis colloque leuavit
obnixus portatque furens et pergit in antrum.
strangulat inde premens constricto gutture pugno.
corruit ante pedes aries prostratus anheli,
laniferi spes una gregis …
uritur horrendum flamma torrente cadaver.
ignibus in mediis semiustum sorbet anhelans
intrepidus totumque fero consumpsit hiatu.

Already in the well-known long Vergilian *ekphrasis*, which constitutes Corippus' direct source (*Aen.* 8,193–305),[66] the struggle between Hercules and Cacus is often interpreted as a type of dualistic struggle between good and evil, or order and chaos. It is particularly suitable to represent the conflict between Romans and barbarian tribes. To Vergil, in fact, we owe the major innovation in the traditional story, namely the transformation of Cacus into a demonic and hellish monster. Therefore Hercules' fight against him on the site of Rome sets out the basic theme of a Gigantomachy. The allegorisation of the episode became more and more evident during Late Antiquity. It seems worth quoting Fulgentius, *Mitologiar. Lib.* 2,3 (p. 42 Helm), who interprets the noun *Cacus* as a Latin transliteration of the Greek adjective κακός—a fortunate exegesis which would be very influential during the medieval period. Again, Corippus shortens the long Vergilian passage and applies directly to Antalas some features of Cacus, in order to evoke the dark, nocturnal atmosphere and the savage bestiality of the meal. Moreover, the killing and roasting of the ram is modeled on Hercules' killing of Cacus (259–267), perhaps through a sensitive *Kontrastimitation*.

Similarly, in Book VI (210–218), the reorganization of the African troops after a crucial defeat, and their new leader, the nasty Carcasan, are introduced by recalling the myth of Antaeus, the gigantic son of Neptune and the Earth, who was said to grow stronger every time he touched his mother Earth, but was defeated and overcome by Hercules as well:

victus ut Herculeis Antaeus saepe lacertis
contacta lassum reparabat corpus harena,
sponte cadens, victor donec Tirynthius artem
nosceret, et summis complexus viribus hostem

[66] This episode is discussed by K. Galinski, 'The Hercules-Cacus Episode in *Aeneid* VIII', *AJP* 87 (1966), 18–51; see also Id., *The Herakles Theme*, Oxford 1972.

pensasset pronum cum magno pondere corpus,
guttura saeva premens: ut terram tangere matrem
non potuit, victrix miseri mors lumina clausit:
sic victus vires Carcasan innovat omnes
Syrtibus a propriis.

The story of Antaeus had already been developed by Lucan in *Bellum Civile* 4,589–660, a long aetiological section that introduces the episode of the wretched Curio. But Statius hinted at it as well (*Theb.* 6,893–896), paralleling Tydaeus with Hercules: *Herculeis pressum sic fama lacertis / terrigenam sudasse Libyn, cum fraude reperta / raptus in excelsum, nec iam spes ulla cadendi / nec licet extrema matrem contingere planta.*

Furthermore, this myth was particularly suitable to an African poem like the *Iohannis*, due to its peculiar scenery.[67] Corippus recalls the salient passages of the story, borrowing from both Statius and Lucan.

What is consequential, in my opinion, is to consider how Corippus, by evoking the two monsters or the giants, alludes also to Hercules—namely to a paradigmatic symbol of reason and cosmic order. The Herculean myth gained favour in Late Antiquity too and the hero was often paralleled to Christ.[68] The allegorisation of the struggle between Hercules and Antaeus was, besides, widespread in Late Antiquity and lasted till the Middle Ages, and was evoked even by Milton.[69] In particular, it is worth noticing that Fulgentius, whose chronology is still much debated, nevertheless can be usefully related to our poet.[70] For example, insofar as he reflects current Christian attitudes of mistrust and condemnation of pagan laxity and superstition, in spite of his classical style, Fulgentius offers an allegorical interpretation of the myth. He interprets Antaeus (likened to the Greek word ἀντίον) as carnal lust. This is conceived of the flesh and emerges the more agile by keeping

[67] For the choice of themes which recreate a wasteland atmosphere in order to evoke the desert land of Africa, see also 6,299–308 with a simile modelled on Statius, *Theb.* 4,680–710. This passage and the ones devoted to Antaeus and Phaethon are discussed by V. Zarini, 'Aspects et paradoxes du désert dans une épopée latine de l'Afrique chrétienne du VIe siècle', in G. Nauroy–P. Halen–A. Spica (eds.), *Le désert, un espace paradoxal*, Bern 2003, 143–157, 148ff.

[68] M. Simon, *Hercule et le Christianisme*, Paris 1955.

[69] See, *e.g.*, Guido da Pisa, *Super Comediam Dantis* 652; Milton, *Par. Regain.* 4,563ff., both arguing that Hercules is Christ and Antaeus the devil. Hercules' struggle against Cacus and Antaeus is recorded also by Boethius, *Cons.* 4, m. 7; and by Mart. Cap., 6,667; Aug., *De Civ. Dei* 12,7.

[70] Hays (n. 2), 102, after recalling the question, suggests also a new chronology, posterior to Corippus, for he recognizes a probable echo of the *Iohannis* in *Mit.* 13,9.

touch with the earth; for libidinous desires become more and more evil as they occupy the flesh. Hercules' long struggle implies that virtue takes a long time to surpass vices.[71]

c. *Prefiguration*

Corippus, however, chooses another allusion, since he makes Hercules a prefiguration of John, who, therefore, will succeed in his struggle against the Berber tribes. Such a displaced allusion had been already employed by Vergil, who introduced the story of Hercules and Cacus in order to suggest the ultimate duel between Aeneas and Turnus.

Another example of punished *hybris* applied to the Moors is offered by the story of Phaethon, which Corippus recalls in Book I (336–340). In all reliability he draws on the long passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,[72] but also on a brief mention in Lucretius (5,396–405). Phaethon's story had been variously employed by epic poets, not to mention Stoic exegesis that saw in it an example of the final conflagration of the world.[73] It will be sufficient to recall Lucan (2,413–414), Statius (*Theb.* 1,219–221) and, in Late Antiquity, Sidonius (*Carm.* 7,405–410), where the poet likens the Scythians fearing the arrival of Avitus to Phaethon frightened of the arrival of his father. Various interpretations were given of this account, which, despite the implicit warnings, in Ovid's version has a positive nuance, since the poet seems to be fascinated by Phaethon's daring temperament. During the Middle Ages, however, Phaethon little by little became a type of pride and was paralleled either with Lucifer revolting against God or with the Antichrist.[74] Such interpretation is partially blatant in Corippus, who introduces, as usual, a simile at the

[71] P. 43 Helm; cf. N. Tadic, "Une étymologie fulgentienne: celle d'Antée," *Latomus* 28 (1969), 685–690.

[72] R.C. Bass, 'Some Aspects of the Structure of the Phaethon Episode in Ovid's Metamorphoses', *CQ* 27 (1977), 402–408; M. Ciappi, 'La narrazione ovidiana del mito di Fetonte e le sue fonti', *Athenaeum* 88 (2000), 117–168. Corippus' treatment is discussed by G.W. Shea, 'Myth and Religion in an Early Christian Epic', *Med. Stud.* 35 (1973), 118–128, and Vinchesi (n. 3), *ad loc.*

[73] For a religio-historical perspective see J. Rudhardt, 'Le mythe de Phaéthon', *Kernos* 10 (1997), 83–95.

[74] R. Chevallier, 'Le mythe de Phaéthon d'Ovide à G. Moreau. Formes et symboles', Caesarodunum 17bis (1982), 387–439, 403, who, after citing some passages in Claudian (see, *e.g.*, *in Ruf.* 2,211), deals with the political meaning of Phaethons' myth. It is perhaps worth remembering that Milton's description of Satan's descent from the outer shell of the universe in *Paradise Lost* 3,526ff. is modelled on Ovid's description of Phaethon.

end of a long and elaborate description of the African cities set on fire by the rebellious Moors:

> *haud aliter Phaethon cunctis e partibus orbis*
> *non bene concesso succenderat omnia curru*
> *flammivomis raptatus equis, ni fulmine summo*
> *omnipotens genitor, terras miseratus, anhelos*
> *disiunxisset equos, restinguens ignibus ignem.*

Ovid's passage is variously echoed, although with the insertion of a 'moralising' note, by the words *non bene* and, most of all, *terras miseratus*, an imagery which Corippus usually applies to the merciful Christian God (here designated by the already classical '*Allmachtsformel*'), or to the righteous Byzantines. Scholars have noted how the first two lines reproduce *Metamorphoses* 2,227, *tum vero Phaethon cunctis e partibus orbem / adspicit accensum*,[75] whereas the end of the simile is modelled on 2,304–305, *at pater omnipotens superos testatus … nisi opem ferret*, and 313–314, *et saevis conpescuit ignibus ignem*, with the same striking *polyptoton*.

The most interesting employment of a classical myth is indeed offered by the following example, which will be my conclusive one. The peculiar fighting technique of the Berbers called *corona* ("crown"), that consisted in arranging in concentric circles various animals, camels or cattle, around the camp, in order to protect it and confuse the enemies,[76] is explicitly compared to the Cretan Labyrinth and to the snares it set for Theseus. Corippus displays the salient passages of the story in an abridged simile, focusing his attention on the death of the Minotaur, which is described in a quite realistic way, and on the entanglements of the Cretan palace (4, 597–613).

> *bellorum at princeps nocturno tempore Ierna,*
> *sollicitus curis, muros per castra camelis*
> *construit, octono circumdans ordine campum.*
> *inde boves iungit, bis terno cornua gyro*
> *cornibus arte ligans, et multo callidus astu*
> *implicitas errore parat per devia fraudes,*
> …
> *non Labyrintheis Minoia cura latebris*
> *flexerat ancipites tantis anfractibus orbes,*
> *distorquens errore vias, quas callidus arte*

[75] Luc. 2,413 is closer to Corippus: *succendit Phaethon*.

[76] B.D. Shaw, 'The Camel in North Africa and the Sahara', *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* 41 (1979), 663–721; 'The Structure of Local Society in the Early Maghrib', *The Maghrib Review* 16 (1991), 18–54, esp. 21.

invenit, tento revocans vestigia filo,
Aegides monitus. pectus tunc ipse biforme
ense ferit misti generis. vomit ille cruorem
et ruit obscurae confringens cornua terrae.

The passage shows a certain rhetorical skill, for the turns of phrase are arranged in complex and tortuous succession, perhaps to recall the labyrinthine entanglements. Yet classical borrowings are palpable as well. The reader immediately is faced with Vergilian echoes from the famous *ekphrasis* at the beginning of *Aeneid* Six. The hybrid nature of the Minotaur to which Corippus hints with *pectus biforme … mixti generis* is modelled on Vergil's line 25, *mixtumque genus prolesque biformis*; the combination *tento revocans vestigia filo* imitates Vergil's *caeca regens filo vestigia* (l. 30), which is derived, in turn, from Catullus, 64,113. Moreover, Vergil himself employed the labyrinth imagery in a simile (5,588–591), with the purpose of describing a sort of ritual *decursio* at the culmination of Anchises' funeral games and entwining the complexity of this ritual.[77] Corippus hints at it by the adjective *anceps*, which he borrows from line 589. Nor should influence from Ovid be excluded, testified by the rare patronymic epithet *Aegides*.[78]

Ovid, in fact, treated at greater length what Vergil handled allusively in his description of the Cumaean temple, subordinating the myth to Aeneas' toil and inserting the *ekphrasis* into a network of allusions that gradually shape a vision of Aeneas's life into a laborious errand through a series of mazes. Although the labyrinth becomes more important merely as a setting and less resonant as an image than in Vergil, Ovid's story is particularly suitable for an allegorisation 'in malo' of the maze. He seems to emphasize the lustful and perverse amorous liaisons of Minos and Scylla, of Pasiphae and the Minotaur, and Theseus' abandonment of Ariadne, as well as Daedalus' sake for cunning artfulness.

The authority of both Vergil and Ovid contributed to transmit to later periods such a complex iconography, which already in antiquity could symbolise an ordeal or initiation, and usually functioned as a sign

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[77] The so called *lusus Troiae*, which, according to Suetonius (*Aug.* 43,2), was practiced by noble youth still at the end of the republic. Textual echoes between the two Vergilian passages are outlined by W. Fitzgerald, 'Aeneas, Daedalus and the labyrinth', *Arethusa* 17 (1984), 51–65, sometimes unconvincingly; B. Catto, 'The labyrinth on the Cumaean gates and Aeneas' escape from Troy', *Vergilius* 34 (1988), 71–76, both with bibliography.

[78] It is also worth noticing the unusual adjective *labyrintheus*, which was coined by Catullus and reemployed during Late Antiquity by authors, whom surely Corippus knew (Sedul., *Carm. Pasch.* 1,43; Mart. Cap., 6,579). See also Ennod., *Carm.* 1, 1, 31.

of complex artistry, representing divine mysteries and unutterability as well.[79] However, notwithstanding its many positive nuances, the maze was often employed by Christian authors to exemplify the fatal attractions and confusions of heresy and paganism.[80] It became a favourite symbol to explain allegorically the uncertainties and the entanglements of this deceitful world, which are fatal unless God is one's guide. This seems to have been one of the reasons for depicting labyrinths on the pavements or walls of churches and cathedrals, a practice that was particularly widespread in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The aesthetic message emphasizes talent, perhaps with a glance at the labour involved in the creation of so articulated a building, and ideology, insofar as Christian art is meant to surpass the ancient labyrinths. But the temple of Christ also triumphs over the temple of Apollo at Cumae, offering a safer passage to the afterlife. It is important to remark that pictorial or mosaic representations of mazes were largely widespread in North Africa, which, among the provinces of the Roman Empire preserves sixteen exemplars (21 in Gaul and 10 in Italy). In particular, the oldest known Christian example is in the basilica of Reparatus at Orleansville, in Algeria, which dates from the fourth century. A large Roman mosaic on a tomb in Soussa (Tunisia), reads, *hic inclusus vitam perdit*, thus pointing to an allegorical reading of such an imagery. The labyrinth, therefore, could be a familiar image to Corippus' audience.[81] Augustine provides a detailed explanation of its symbolism as well. In *De Civ. Dei* 18,13, he compares the maze to a prison and accentuates its metaphoric inextricability.

In this passage Corippus does not present a real allegorisation of the story. Nevertheless, he chooses a metaphor that is based on the impossi-

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[79] Useful is the recent monograph by P. Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages*, Ithaca 1990, with many references. For religious significance of the maze see L. de Freitas, 'Labyrinth', in L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Detroit 2005, 5273–5279. Among Christian testimonies *in positivo* for the labyrinth imagery see Greg. Naz., *Or.* 28,25; Mar. Vict., *Ars Gramm.*, p. 60 (a work written when Victorinus was still a pagan, but very influential in the Middle Ages); Ennod., *Carm.* 1,1, not to mention various passages in Boethius.

[80] See in particular Sedul., *Carm. Pasch.* 1,43ff.; Prudent., *Symm.*, 2,847ff., where the poet argues against allowing the worship of pagan gods.

[81] E. Marec, 'Le thème du labyrinthe et du Minotaure dans la mosaïque romaine', in M. Renard (ed.) *Hommage à A. Grenier*, Brussel 1962, 1094–1112; A. Mahjoubi, 'Le thème du labyrinthe et du Minotaure figuré sur une mosaïque de Belalis Major (Henchir el-Faouar)', *Africa* 3–4 (1969–1970), 335–343; W. Batschelet-Massini, 'Labyrinthzeichnungen in Handschriften', *Codices Manuscripti* 4 (1978), 33–65 (esp. 41); H. Slim, 'La mosaïque du labyrinthe de Thysdrus', *AntAfr* 15 (1980), 201–215.

bility of escaping from the maze, and sees the labyrinth as a treacherous place. Moreover, there is a subtle allusion to Theseus, who was considered by Christian authors a type of Christ extricating humans from the labyrinthine eternal death. More generally, he symbolised the overcoming of the dark forces of demonic powers (or lust)[82] and as such is another foreshadowing of the final victory of John. Therefore Coripppus' pious hero, who in the preface had been addressed as better than Aeneas, becomes a second version of Theseus. He knows how to handle *errores* and is able to traverse safely the tangles and the dangers set out by his perfidious enemies—just as the previous metaphors rendered him akin to Hercules, whose slaying of the giants Cacus and Antaeus prefigure the annihilation of the Berbers at the hand of the Byzantines.

Conclusion

I think that these examples can well demonstrate the varied intermingling of classical and Christian references in Corippus. It is not fortuitous that the ancient poetical language and tradition are discreetly manipulated to act as an enabling formula, or as a commonly agreed shorthand. With it one can sum up strictly contemporary situations, for example as far as the barbarian menace or the intensifying connection between state and religion is concerned.[83] Furthermore, the patent allusions to his sources and the recalling of many famous myths allow guessing an identikit of his audience as well, by means of a reading-oriented perspective. At the same time I hope that I was able to demonstrate how the poet distorted the tradition inherited from classical culture and reshaped common cultural codes, thus successfully developing new, original features. He metabolises his models, merging and transforming them into a new product suitable to the changed tastes and attitudes of his audience. If we consider Corippus' *Iohannis* on the ground of the new scholarly acquisitions about late antique poetry, we can judge it an interesting product of his age. It combines classical cul-

[82] See, *e.g.*, Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat.* 35; *In Eccles. Hom.* 6, p. 379 Alexander; a truly allegorical interpretation of Theseus, Ariadne and the labyrinth can be found in the pseudo-Fulgentian *Commentary on the Thebaid* (p. 186 Helm), a work which is, however, ascribed to the tenth or twelfth century. See also Chaucer, *Knight's Tale*, 978 ff. and the *Ovidius Moralizatus* 307.

[83] See for example the attractive approach by Av. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, Berkeley–London-Los Angeles 1991.

ture and rhetorical devices, but is also permeated by a new flavour that preludes some poetical experiments in the Middle Ages.[84] The occasionally weak stylistic features (the poet cannot compete with Claudian or Prudentius in splendour and grandeur!) are compensated with an excellent ability in description or allegorisation, in the blurring of different images, in the ideologically oriented use of similes and, *lato sensu*, metaphoric images. Such qualities call for a sympathetic interpretation of both the African literary background and the historical value of the poem.

[84] P. Galand Hallyn, 'La Johannide (*de Bellis Libycis*). Corippe et le sublime dans la 'dernière' épopée romaine', in: *À la croisée des études libyco-berbéres. Mélanges offerts à P. et L. Galand*, Paris 1993, 73–87.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF THE *ECLOGA THEODULI*: WHERE IS THE AUTHORIAL VOICE?

M. Herren

The *Ecloga Theoduli* has long been a challenge to scholars.[1] Mystery surrounds the identity of its author, its date and milieu of composition, as well as its purpose and meaning. Medieval commentators, beginning with Bernard of Utrecht, believed that Theodulus was the real name of the author, and that he was educated at Athens.[2] Attempts were even made to identify Theodulus with specific writers of the same name. However, there is now complete agreement that Theodulus is a pseudonym, that the real author lived out his life in the West, and that all of the sources of the work are Latin.[3] Until early in the last century Theodulus was identified with Gottschalk of Orbais on the ground that the Greek name Theodulus, 'slave or servant of God', is a direct rendering of the German name Gottschalk, made up of the same elements.[4] The use of the Greek names 'Pseustis', 'Alithia', and 'Phronesis', the chief protagonists of the poem, also supported the theory of Gottschalk's authorship, as there is evidence that this ninth-century writer had some knowledge of Greek. However, in 1924, Karl Strecker questioned the identification on metrical grounds.[5] Theodulus's poetic techniques differed from those in Gottschalk's evidenced in his surviving metrical poetry. The *Ecloga*, however, cannot be later than

[1] Editions: F. Mosetti Casaretto, *Teodulo Ecloga: il canto della verità e della menzogna*, Florence 1997; R.P.H. Green, *Seven Versions of Carolingian Pastoral*, Reading 1979, 111–149. J. Osternacher, *Ecloga Theoduli*, Urfahr–Lenz 1902. For the sake of convenience I cite Green's edition here. A complete translation of the poem organized by 'rounds' will be found in the appendix.

[2] See the accessus to Bernard of Utrecht's *Commentum in Theodulum*, in: R. Huygens (ed), *Accessus ad auctores*, Leiden 1970, 59–60.

[3] The most thorough study of the sources to date is: R.P.H. Green, 'The Genesis of a Medieval Textbook: The Models and Sources of the Ecloga Theoduli', *Viator* 13 (1982), 49–106.

[4] Osternacher (n. 1), 65–71; also P. von Winterfeld, *Archiv für Neuere Sprache*, n.s. 14 (1905), 65–71.

[5] K. Strecker, 'Studien zu karolingischen Dichtern: VII. Ist Gottschalk der Dichter der "Ecloga Theoduli"', *Neues Archiv* 45 (1924), 14–31, esp. 18–23.

the eleventh century, since the earliest manuscript, Eton 150, is dated to that time, and the first commentary, that by Bernard, was written towards the end of the same century. The long and rich commentary tradition, as well as the literary influence of the work, transmitted in more than 200 manuscripts, has been set out in detail by Betty Quinn.[6]

From a formal point of view, the poem is closely modelled on the Vergilian eclogue, specifically the *Seventh Eclogue*, a singing contest between shepherds, with the outcome decided by a judge. Our eclogue consists of 344 hexameter lines, plus a colophon of eight lines. The first thirty-six lines provide a bucolic setting and introduce the three principal characters. These are the shepherd Pseustis ('Liar'), the shepherdess Alithia ('Truth'), and another shepherdess Phronesis ('Prudence'), the last taking the role of umpire of the singing contest. After the characters are introduced and the rules of the contest established, the two principal antagonists, Pseustis and Alithia, proceed to the fray. Each entry is strictly limited to four lines at a time, as in Vergil's *Seventh Eclogue*. What I shall call a 'bout' or 'round' consists of a four-line entry by Pseustis, followed by a four-line response by Alithia. Pseustis presents a Greek myth, often containing a moral point, in capsule form. Alithia's job is to match Pseustis's entry with an equivalent or similar story drawn from the Old Testament. The whole match is laid out approximately according to biblical chronology from the creation down to late Old Testament history; only at the beginning does the author attempt the same for Greek myth. Not surprisingly, at the end of the poem, Phronesis the judge awards the palm to Alithia—after all, how could someone named 'Truth' lose a battle with a person called 'Falsehood'? Thus there is a clear winner of the singing contest, just as there is in the Vergilian model, but in neither case are we told what the criteria for the judge's decision are supposed to be.

In Vergil's poem, Corydon and Thyrsis contend in their descriptions of nature and the qualities of the shepherds each loves. The *Seventh Eclogue* is beautiful and charming, but it is hard to see how its matter can be taken seriously. Moreover, it seems that the decision of Meliboeus the judge to award the contest to Corydon is completely arbitrary. In contrast, the *Ecloga Theoduli*, whatever its occasional failings of logic or presentation, deals with a serious subject, namely the rival

[6] O. Kristeller (ed), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, vol. 2, Washington DC, 1971, 383–408.

claim of pagan myths and the Bible to represent cosmology, history, and human morality in a truthful way. The decision at the end is not unexpected. Alithia wins not only because her name means 'Truth' and her opponent's means 'Liar', but because the truth she stands for is the truth of the Bible, the Word of God, while Pseustis's claims are based on nothing better than the lies of poets. From earliest times Christians were in agreement that there could be no factual basis to pagan myths. Indeed, the Greek word 'mythos' and its Latin equivalent 'fabula' were considered synonymous with 'fiction' or 'lie', or at best, with a doubtful account of events.[7] The pagans had stories, the Christians, histories. What pagans might claim, according to Christians, is a kind of hidden truth, called variously 'involucrum' or 'integumentum'[8] Such truths might be of a psychological or physical nature, that is, referring to truths about human character or the natural universe. But Christians could claim more. Not only did biblical stories contain spiritual or allegorical meanings, they must also be regarded as literally true. In the *City of God* Augustine argued that it was allowed to interpret the Bible allegorically, provided that one did not deny the literal meaning of the text.[9] Thus, Alithia's examples taken from Scripture must be regarded as histories, descriptions of events that really occurred; Pseustis's stories, on the other hand, are no more than poetic fictions.

Of course, as one will observe, the author enabled Alithia to win the day by allowing her to counter every one of Pseustis's darts with a usually skilful defence. Placed at a disadvantage as the second speaker, Alithia displays great inventiveness in instantly responding to her opponent's 'attacks' with a suitable scriptural parallel. This fact would seem to explain why Pseustis appeals to the pagan gods for help in rounds 19 32, and 35 and displays his exhaustion in rounds 27 and 33—a diminution which Alithia herself takes note of in 27. But all of this belongs to the poet's narrative art, not to *intentio scribendi*. Did Theodulus intend us to derive a deeper meaning from the poem, and if so, does he show the reader or listener the way? This question, of course, is the focal point of this symposium—how did poets act as interpreters of their own work, or the work of others? Are we always aware when they do this? These

[7] P. Dronke, *Fabula*, Leiden 1974, 13–78.

[8] See, in the first instance, É. Jeauneau, 'L'usage de la notion d'*integumentum* à travers les gloses de Guillaume de Conches', *Archives d'histoire et littéraire du moyen âge* 24 (1957), 35–100.

[9] P. Frederiksen, 'Allegory and Reading God's Good Book', in: J. Whitman (ed), *Allegory and Interpretation*, Leiden 2000, 125–149, esp. 139–149.

are hard questions, and particularly hard in the case of the *Ecloga Theoduli*, because the poet never stands outside his own work, or speaks with his own voice. There is neither authorial comment, nor ekphrasis. All is done through narrative and dialogue. But there is another principle at work, and that is comparison, or juxtaposition.

What happens when we compare like things? Let us try to answer this question with a banal example such as the comparison of two automobiles made in the same year. If one costs 10,000 euros and another 100,000, one can be fairly sure that the latter will be superior to the former in all aspects except the advantage of price. But suppose we compare two cars that cost 40,000 euros, and they belong to the same class of car—four-door sedans, let us say. If we test drive them both and are not automatically disposed to prefer one brand over another, the following is likely to result. We may well conclude that we prefer the steering mechanism of car A to car B, but like the transmission of car B better than car A. Car A has better braking, but car B has a smoother engine. And on it goes. But something tips the decision in the end to buy one rather than the other. One driver might care more about speed than safety, or think about handling rather than comfort. Another might just go for the sexier-looking car. But we always ask ourselves, what factor was overriding in our decision, if we exclude brand loyalty, or habit?

Comparisons of like objects, then, especially when they are set side-by-side, seen and experienced at the same time, lead us to think about the respective strengths and weaknesses of the objects compared. But, to be sure, strengths and weaknesses are not the only things we evaluate. We are not always asked to judge the superiority of one object to another, or decide on relative merits. Sometimes we are challenged to perceive different, but equally valid, messages in objects that communicate meaning. For example, two paintings of the same period and dealing with the same theme, can be juxtaposed, as they were in the recent exhibit in London's National Gallery entitled 'Caravaggio the Final Years'.[10] At the outset of the exhibit the viewer is exposed to Caravaggio's two treatments of the 'Supper at Emmaus', the first from 1601, the second from 1606. There can be no question of the technical superiority of one painting to the other. The juxtaposition does not invite an aesthetic judgement. Rather, it asks the viewer to reflect on the different

[10] *Caravaggio the Final Years: Exhibition Guide*, London: National Gallery 2005, 1–2.

interpretations of the same event that are conveyed by the two works. In the 1601 painting Christ is (surprisingly) beardless and youthful-looking, possibly suggesting that the painter wanted to emphasize the rejuvenating effects of Christ's (and, hopefully, his own) resurrection. In the 1606 painting Christ is portrayed as bearded and more mature looking. The colours are muted, and the whole scene more sombre in appearance, suggesting, perhaps, the artist's own need for reflection and repentance.

Juxtapositions like the one above are, of course, conceived by curators. The same comparison between these paintings could have been made (with less immediate pleasure for the viewer) by a professor of art history working from slides or power point. However, in both cases, someone other than the painter wants us to see a particular meaning—a meaning that is in the mind of the curator or art history professor. (The artist himself may, or may not, have been conscious of his own interpretation of the theme he was painting, or at least may not have been conscious of a change in his interpretation over time.) Another way of saying this is that the curator (or professor) speaks with an authorial voice. He or she selects the objects to be compared, and sets them in a particular context, in order to make a statement. At the same time, the person speaking with the authorial voice expects that his viewers or hearers will reach the same conclusions about the comparanda as the speaker has. This will depend very much on how carefully the comparanda are chosen, and on what sorts of judgements their evaluators will be expected to make.

In the case of the *Ecloga Theoduli*, the recipients are not expected to make aesthetic judgements. Nor are they expected to decide about the literal truth or plausibility of the events compared in the competing stories. The latter is a given for reasons already put forward. Should there be the least doubt about which speaker has the better claim to historical truth, Phronesis allays it at the end of the poem. But there is still the competition between the 'involucra' of the respective stories. Do 'Christian' tales—and here we must recognize that the Old Testament has been appropriated *holus bolus* to Christianity—always exhibit higher moral values and yield happier outcomes than pagan ones? We have a dilemma. If Pseustis can make as good a case or better than Alithia for the moral value of his tales, then why bother to take out a membership in a Christian community? On the other hand, if Pseustis's moral claims can be dismissed prima facie, why did the author take the trouble to write a rather long, complex poem? I would submit that the claims of secular literature to equal or to surpass

the moral standards of Christianity must have had resonance when the poem was composed, and may have posed enough of a threat in some intellectual circles as to require a response. Moreover, for the poem to possess artistic merit, the struggle presented must display tension. The duel must be a close one, and Pseustis must fight well enough to make readers of the poem think, if only for a tense second, that he might win, just as readers of the *Aeneid* might be tempted to believe momentarily that Turnus might defeat Aeneas.

The *Ecloga* presents the reader with thirty-four bouts between Pseustis and Alithia, of which twenty-nine are competing versions of a Christian (i.e. Old Testament) and a pagan tale with comparable content. I should like to stand in for Phronesis. Indeed, as the maiden herself states in lines 30–32, she lives with her parents and has an early curfew. I'll send her home with her sheep and take over her job. In what follows I shall provide you with a blow-by-blow account of some of the more exciting rounds, and tell you who got the better of them, and why. I shall employ two main criteria in deciding the outcome of individual rounds: (1) which tale represents a higher moral standard? (2) which tale yields a happier outcome? The application of the first of these criteria may seem arbitrary at some points; yet, for the second, the time-tried principle of 'finem lauda' often makes a clear decision possible. In cases where the criteria come into conflict, i.e. where a favourable result is secured through immoral means, I have taken the high ground and privileged morality. In the end, one must admit that the fight was fixed in Alithia's favour. However, as I intend to argue, Pseustis won a few rounds, and some others might be judged as draws. The authorial voice is, therefore, ambivalent. It is because of this ambiguity that the poem remains interesting, and an ongoing challenge to its readers.

The rounds can be divided into three main classes: (1) those where the competing narratives deal with parallel narrative content and / or prototypes, and have similar outcomes; (2) those where content and / or prototypes are parallel, but outcomes are different; (3) those where the stories, though not parallel, are connected through symbolism. Some rounds are difficult to classify, and one instance (round 8) will be treated as a separate case.

Round 5 (lines 69–76) comparing the flood stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Genesis illustrates a class 1 round very well:

> *P. Venit ab Oceano summergens cuncta vorago;*
> *tellus cessit aquae, periit quod vixerat omne.*
> *Deucalion homines, preter quem nemo superstes*,

cum Pirra iactis renovavit coniuge saxis.
A. Ultio digna Dei fontes dirupit abissi
octavum Noe servans in partibus arche;
amodo ne talem patiantur saecula cladem,
visibus humanis per nubila panditur Iris.[11]

Both stories describe cataclysmic floods that destroy everything except a single couple. Pseustis's story ends with the restoration of humanity. Alithia's does the same, but also includes God's promise that the calamity will be not be repeated. This, I think, decides the round in her favour, because it enhances an already good outcome. If we bring aesthetics (rhetorical skill) into the decision, Alithia earns an extra point for good boxing style by appropriating the pagan goddess Iris to the Christian cause and making her stand in for the biblical rainbow, or 'arcus'.

Round 7 (lines 85–92) has a similar configuration:

P. Surrexere viri terra genitrices creati;
pellere caelicolas fuit omnibus una voluntas.
Mons cumulat montem, sed totum Iuppiter hostem
fulmine deiectum Vulcani trusit in antrum.
A. Posteritas Adae summa Babilonis in arce
turrim construxit, quae caelum tangere possit.
excitat ira Deum: confusio fit labiorum,
disperguntur ibi, nomen non excidit urbi.[12]

Pseustis's story recounts the giants' revolt against the gods: they pile up mountains so as to climb up to Olympus and oust their rivals. Alithia recounts the familiar story of the building of the tower of Babel. One might object that the stories are not precisely parallel, because in the pagan myth there are giants instead of men, while the Bible story is about mankind. Moreover, Pseustis makes it clear that the giants seek to expel the gods, whereas in Alithia's tale the men are simply trying to reach the sky. The reader is expected to supply the alleged motivation for men's actions from Genesis 11:4: '… and let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands'. One might add that the punishment of the giants was harsher than that inflicted on men. But the framework of the stories is parallel, as is the outcome. Lesser beings build high structures to overthrow, or else to become equal to, the gods; both groups are punished. This round looks like a tie.

[11] Ed. Green, 27–28.
[12] Ed. Green, 28.

Round 11 (lines 117–124) compares Pseustis's tale of Diomedes' wounding of Venus in battle with Alithia's description of Jacob wrestling with the Lord:

> *P. Argolicas contra bellans acies Citharea*
> *Titidae manibus grave pertulerat dea vulnus.*
> *deplorant socii commissa ducis furiosi,*
> *nam facti volucres acuunt pro dentibus ungues.*
> *A. Congressus Domino Iacob luctamine longo*
> *nervos amisit femoris, dum cedere nescit.*
> *quam plagam veluti gemit evenisse parenti,*
> *non comedit nervum successio tota nepotum.*[13]

In both cases the sins of the fathers are visited upon either companions or children: the comrades of Diomedes are turned into birds, while the offspring of Jacob abstain from eating the sinew of the thigh. In this bout structural symmetry is coupled with moral symmetry: an individual engages in physical combat against a god (God), and an associated group, rather than the responsible individual, pays the penalty. Venus and Jehovah dispense justice in the same way. If Theodulus wished his readers to see the moral superiority of Christianity to paganism, he might have exerted his authorial voice through the selection of a 'superior' biblical tale to illustrate this. As things stand, the round looks like a tie.

Round 12 (lines 125–132) compares the cruel story of Hippolytus and Phaedra with its famous biblical counterpart, the one-sided romance between Joseph and Potiphar's wife:

> *P. Ypolitus saeva perit accusante noverca*
> *distractus bigis focas agitantibus undis.*
> *dampna pudicitiae non pertulit ira Dianae,*
> *Ypolitum revocat; modo nomine Virbius extat.*
> *A. Venditus in servum Ioseph livore suorum,*
> *ardentis dominae dum spernit vota minasque*
> *addictus vinclis, discussit somnia regis*
> *et subduntur ei totius regna Canophi.*[14]

In both cases, an older married woman attempts the seduction of a young unmarried man. In both tales, the young male is portrayed as a paradigm of virtue, while the older female is treated as a prototype of lustful adultery. However, the outcomes of the two tales appear at first

[13] Ed. Green, 29.
[14] Ed. Green, 29.

to be quite distinct. Hippolytus dies terribly, but Joseph, after a bit of a fright, prospers and triumphs. Pseustis, with the author's help, evens up the result: Hippolytus comes back to life through Diana's intervention, living on as Virbius. Reporting such an outcome might be regarded as either careless or subversive, because it allows for a more beneficial outcome for Hippolytus (resurrection) than for Joseph (merely being fat and happy). The round goes to Pseustis.

Round 17 (lines 165–172) features a competition between the well-known myth of the begetting of Hercules and the biblical account of Joshua's victory at the battle of Gabaon:

> *P. Sufficeret thalamis ut Iuppiter Amphitrionis,*
> *noctis opem placidae geminavit candida Phoebe;*
> *protinus Alcmena, licet indignante noverca,*
> *editus Alcides immissos strangulat angues.*
> *A. Victrici populo ne quondam vivida bello*
> *deficeret virtus Gabaon ad praelia, Phoebus*
> *imperio Iosue stabat defixus in arce:*
> *quae sanctae fidei sint praemia, discite cuncti.*[15]

At first, the stories appear to have little in common other than the motif of the halting of time to ensure the favourable outcome of the respective events. The poet skilfully contrasts Jupiter's nocturnal activities conducted under the aegis of Phoebe and Joshua's struggle in broad daylight under the auspices of Phoebus. The night is lengthened by Phoebe so that Jupiter can enjoy the embraces of Alcmena; the day, extended by Phoebus so that Joshua can win victory. Once again, Alithia incorporates a classical figure (here Phoebus) into a biblical story, as she did (with Iris) in round 5, if only to remind us that all things pagan are subject to a hostile takeover by the corporation of Christ. But should you think that the contest is frivolous because one story involves a sexual prank, the other, the victory of God's chosen people, think again. Pseustis's story ends in the conception of Hercules, and pointedly foreshadows his heroic future through the mention of his strangling the serpents which his stepmother dispatched to kill him. Thus, each of the miracles involving the extension of time leads to a happy outcome. However, Jove's success is achieved by sin and stealth, while Joshua's is gained by virtue. The moral contrast is underscored by the contrasting symbolism of darkness and light. Round to Alithia.

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[15] Ed. Green, 30.

Occasionally the poet links one round to another, as he does with rounds 17 and 18 (lines 173–180). In round 18 Hercules fulfils the promise of his infancy by defeating a succession of baneful monsters: Geryon, the hydra, and Cacus. Alithia counters with the story of Samson:

P. Alcide vigilem spoliavit clava draconem,
Cherionis pompam rapit et consumpserat ydram;
Cacus cessit ei, succumbit ianitor Orci,
incendit demum pellex Deianira superbum.
A. Samson exuviis indutus membra leonis
sternit mille viros, devastat vulpibus agros,
urbis claustra tulit, nervorum vincula rupit;
fraude sua tandem praecidit Dalida crinem.[16]

Alithia joins her hero prototypically to Hercules by alluding to 'the spoils of a lion'—both heroes clothed themselves in a lion's pelt. Samson also performed great feats for his people and freed them from danger. The poet then tightly links the two heroes in a similar fate: each is destroyed by the treachery of a woman. Pseustis rather unfairly demonizes Deianira by calling her a 'paelex', 'concubine', even though the ancient sources describe her as a 'wife'. However, the poet's aim is symmetry: Delilah can also be characterized in this way. In the end, two heroes, who are presented as benefactors of their respective societies through their heroic actions, are destroyed through the machinations of 'evil' women. Surely a draw.

Round 28 (lines 261–268) shows Alithia at her best. Pseustis thrusts with the tale of Jupiter and Danae; his opponent parries, surprisingly, with the story of Daniel:

P. Pignoris egregii speciem metuens violari
Acrisius seris obstruxit limina turris.
et iam tecta super pluviam stillavit adulter
virginis in gremium: Danem corruperat aurum.
A. In caveam missum non attigit ira leonum,
quamvis passa famem, tutante Deo Danielem;
signatis foribus cui prandia detulit intus
Abbacuc uno transvectus regna capillo.[17]

The link between the two tales is the motif that even the stoutest defences can be penetrated by the miraculous power of a god (God). However, the motivation of the pagan god is sexual debauchery and

[16] Ed. Green, 30.
[17] Ed. Green, 33.

corruption through gold; that of the Christian God, the sustenance of a saintly man. Clearly virtue triumphs here. Point to Alithia.

Let us now look at examples of the type of bout that we label 'class 2'. These are cases where narrative symmetry is maintained, but outcomes differ. Round 1 is surely puzzling:

> *P. Primus Creteis venit Saturnus ab oris*
> *aurea per cunctas disponens saecula terras*;
> *nullus ei genitor nec quisquam tempore maior;*
> *ipso gaudet avo superum generosa propago.*
> *A. Incola primus homo fuit in viridi paradiso,*
> *coniuge vipereum donec suadente venenum*
> *hausit, eo cunctis miscendo pocula mortis:*
> *sentit adhuc proles, quod commisere parentes.*[18]

Any one familiar with Hesiod's *Theogony* will immediately wonder why Saturn is drawn into a contest with the first man (Adam), when Saturn was a god (or 'titan', more accurately). We must also wonder why he is said to have had no father, when most sources tell us that his father was Caelus (Uranus), and why he is associated with Crete—a site usually linked to Zeus and the Dictaean cave?[19] None of these questions can be easily answered except, perhaps, the first. Our poet here reflects the early medieval practice of euhemerizing the pagan gods—a habit that can be traced to the earliest medieval glossaries.[20] The author is on more stable ground when he associates Saturn with the Golden Age—the oxymoronic binding of the cruel and bestial titan with mankind's happiest age is attested in a number of ancient sources, beginning with Hesiod's *Works and Days*.[21] Pseustis's quatrain ends in rejoicing. Alithia, however, snatches defeat from the jaws of victory. The first man in the biblical account began well, but was undone by the treachery of a woman. In contrast to Saturn, who bequeathed an age of gold to his offspring, Adam's gift to his children was death. The stories are parallel, but Pseustis's tale ends well, Alithia's, badly. Point for Pseustis.

Round 3 (lines 53–60) also goes badly for Alithia. Here we have two narratives about the origins of sacrifice:

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[18] Ed. Green, 27.

[19] See the notes to lines 37, 39, and 40 by Green, ed., 121–122.

[20] M. Herren, 'The Transmission and Reception of Graeco-Roman Mythology in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 27 (1998), 87–103, esp. 101–102.

[21] For Kronos as the initiator of 'the Golden Age', see the references in W.H. Roscher, *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Leipzig, 1890–1894, 2.1, cols. 1457–1461.

P. Egregio Cicropi debetur causa litandi:
ille bovis primo rimatur viscera ferro,
sacra Iovi statuit, quae posteritas celebravit,
condidit Athenas: adiuvit nomine Pallas.
A. Immolat ante Deum Caim de semine frugum;
frater Abel iustus dedit acceptabile munus
sponte ferens agnum (talis decet hostia Christum);
ense cadit fratris, loquitur post funera mortis.[22]

Pseustis's tale is matter-of-fact with a good or at least neutral outcome. Cecrops was the first to invent blood sacrifice and to establish rites for Jupiter. He also founded Athens, named after Pallas Athena. Alithia follows with the story of Cain and Abel. There, blood sacrifice is the origin of the first murder, i.e. a second, unlawful sacrifice. Alithia partially compensates for having to admit this crime by adding a tradition that Abel continued to speak after death, and by noting that Abel's sacrifice consisted of an animal that symbolizes Christ. But these compensations scarcely balance the disaster of the first murder, which occurred in the context of competing forms of sacrifice. Blood sacrifice was beneficial to the Greeks, baneful to God's chosen people. Point for Pseustis. Things start to brighten up for Alithia in round 9 (lines 101–108):

P. Daedalus aptatis liquidum secat aera pennis;
filius insequitur, fragilis sed cera liquatur,
et cadit in pelagus; gemuit sub pondere fluctus.
ille sui compos brumales attigit Arthos.
A. Heredis forma non est motus patriarcha,
quin mactaret eum, nisi vox emissa deorsum
parcere iussisset. rapitur, qui cornibus heret
in dumis aries; sequitur patrem sua proles.[23]

The two tales are conjoined not through the motif of flight, as one might expect, but through the theme of a son's obedience to a father. Pseustis's tale of the flight of Daedalus and Icarus, though a wonderful illustration of Greek ingenuity, does not yield an example of obedience or prudence. Although Icarus's disregard of his father's warning not to fly too close to the sun is not mentioned explicitly, it is clear that the author expects his readers to be acquainted with this aspect of the tale. Alithia, by relating the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac, gains a double victory: she can show Abraham's obedience to his father God, and Isaac's obedience to his father Abra-

[22] Ed. Green, 27. In place of 'Caim' at line 57, Mosetti Casaretto prints 'Cain'.
[23] Ed. Green, 28.

ham. Her closing words, 'the offspring follows his father' is pointed and painful to her opponent: Icarus drowns, Isaac becomes a patriarch. Point to Alithia.

Another good example of parallel motifs with opposite outcomes is found in round 16 (lines 157–164):

> *P. Ventilat oestro decoratam cornibus Io*
> *Iuno ferox et ei tutelam deputat Argi;*
> *mugit pro verbis horrentibus obsita setis,*
> *donec in effigiem rediit mutata priorem.*
> *A. Offensus Balaam calcaribus urget asellam;*
> *angelus occurrit, pecudem qui stare coegit.*
> *res horrenda nimis! laxatur vox animalis,*
> *quae consuevit homo producere verba loquendo.*[24]

Pseustis relates the story of Io's persecution by Juno. Alithia counters with the tale of Balaam's ass. The pagan story ends badly because Io's human speech was removed and replaced with a beast's—though Pseustis reminds us that Io is restored to her former nature. But Alithia's entry is brilliant, since it moves the same motif in the opposite direction and outcome: the raising of the bestial to the human. Thus the pagan story shows nature becoming worse, the Christian tale, nature becoming better. Point to Alithia.

Round 20 (lines 189–196) deals not so much with narrative motifs as with the prototypes Orpheus and David:

> *P. Certavere sequi demissis frondibus orni*
> *Orphea per silvas modulantem carminis odas;*
> *Euridicem, motis qui regna tenent Acherontis,*
> *condicione gravi iussit Proserpina reddi.*
> *A. Ne regis corpus vexaret praedo malignus,*
> *cordarum musa puer adiuvit citharista*
> *cuius erat studium pelles tondere bidentum;*
> *temporis articulo successit dextera sceptro.*[25]

Orpheus and David are juxtaposed as 'types' of the musical art, and the effects of their talents are also compared. Orpheus's songs held power over vegetable nature (trees), but David's had their effects on a human (a king). It is this difference in effect and, inferentially, the sources from which their respective powers come that appear to determine the outcomes. David succeeds to the kingship; Orpheus loses his wife.

[24] Ed. Green, 30.
[25] Ed. Green, 31.

(The reader is expected to know the final result of the 'harsh condition' imposed by Proserpina.) Point to Alithia.

A puzzling example is round 8 (lines 93–100), which I have found difficult to interpret or classify. My first impression was that it lacked parallelism in any of the possible areas of comparanda—narrative structure, prototypes, or symbolism—and for that reason I have taken it out of narrative order:

> *P. Fulmina Ciclopes Iovis imperio fabricantes*
> *Peone percusso morti decrevit Apollo;*
> *mox deitate sua superum spoliatus in ira*
> *Admeti curam pecoris suscepit agendam.*
> *A. Limite iussus Abram patrio discedere Sarram*
> *assumpsit sine spe sobolis sibi concipiendae;*
> *tandem confecta aetate creatur herilis*
> *filius et lactat, sua quam natura gravabat.*[26]

Pseustis relates the story of Apollo's revenge on the Cyclopes, because they made the thunderbolts which struck down Paeon, and Jupiter's subsequent revenge on Apollo for condemning his protégés. Alithia relates the miracle of aged Sarah's impregnation by the even more aged Abraham. A connection can be found in the outcomes: Apollo's temporary loss of divinity (reversal of nature) and the aged couple's acquisition of temporary fertility (also a reversal of nature). One party (Apollo) goes from a powerful situation to a weak one, while another (Abraham with Sarah) experiences the reverse. But what is the cause of the differing outcomes? It is clear enough that Abraham is rewarded with offspring because he was obedient to God's command. But why was Apollo punished? The apparent reason is that he took revenge on the Cyclopes who were obedient to Jupiter. Strictly speaking, then, the causes are not parallel. Apollo acted out of hubris, but did not disobey a command. The round should be declared null and void.

Let us now look at some class 3 examples—rounds where the entries are connected primarily by symbolism. Round 6 (lines 77–84) is one of the most perplexing in the entire poem:

> *P. Ideos lepores puer exagitat Ganimedes;*
> *quem Iovis arreptum devexit in aethera sursum*
> *armiger; ablato divum concesserat ordo*
> *nomen pincernae, quod possedit prius Hebe.*
> *A. Corvum perfidiae dampnant animalia quaeque,*

[26] Ed. Green, 28.

nuntius inclusis quia noluit esse salutis.
ore columba suo ramum viridantibus intro
detulerat foliis; superest Armenia testis.[27]

The rape of Ganymede is juxtaposed—one can scarcely say 'compared'—with the story of the birds that did or did not bring back a message to Noah's ark. The obvious biblical narrative parallel to the story of Ganymede is the assumption of Enoch, but this has already been used in round 4, and is no longer available. This strikes one as odd at first, for adducing this parallel would have led to a clear victory for Alithia: Ganymede was turned into an object of debauchery, while Enoch became an athlete of God awaiting the last battle against the Leviathan. However, the round is unified by the symbolism of three birds: the eagle, a bird of prey which kills and eats the flesh of its victims; the raven, a scavenger which does not kill, but eats flesh in the form of carrion; and the dove, which neither kills nor eats flesh or carrion. However, such a Levi-Straussian analysis (complete with mediating raven!) almost certainly would not have occurred to Theodulus, who doubtless interpreted motifs according to medieval Christian symbolism. For him, the eagle would have represented the violent aggressiveness of paganism; the gentle dove, Christianity, as it symbolized both peace and the Holy Spirit; the black raven, whom the animals 'condemn for perfidy', would most likely have stood for Judaism, which betrayed Christ and refused to accept salvation. (In our poem this bird refuses to bring news of safety to the ark, a parallel to alleged Jewish unwillingness to accept the good news of salvation.) The dove is, from a moral standpoint, the best of the three birds, because it rejects both violence and perfidy. Despite the opaqueness of this round, the point must be awarded to Alithia.

Round 13 (lines 133–140) is also a complex case. While narrative parallels are present—inventing good arts (writing) or destroying bad ones (magic), the most important connection is through the symbolism of the snake:

P. Grecorum primus vestigat grammata Cadmus.
postquam sevit humi dentes septemplicis ydri,
quos necdum fato mersit fortuna sinistro,
ne patiatur idem, se sibilat esse draconem.
A. Raptus aquis Moyses magicas everterat artes;
omnis eum regio timuit circumflua Nilo.

[27] Ed. Green, 28.

eduxit cives, submersit fluctibus hostes;
Menphios exitium testatur adhuc mare rubrum.[28]

In Pseustis's story the serpent is an equivocal symbol: it is a baneful monster, but its teeth provide the seed of mankind. Yet the seed is bad, for the resulting armed men destroy one another, with only five surviving. In the end, Cadmus must claim to be a snake himself in order to survive. In Alithia's tale, snakes are unequivocally evil. Moses's victory in the snake contest is a clear-cut triumph over evil and leads to his success in rescuing his people. From a Christian point of view, the snake is identical to Satan and the tempter in the Garden of Paradise. Cadmus's undoing was his foolish belief that any good could come out of the substance of the cosmic serpent. Point to Alithia.

As the poem moves to its conclusion—roughly from round 30 onwards—the format varies. Instead of the strict paradigm of myth set against biblical story, one sees debates of general ideas, the introduction of riddles, and Pseustis's increasing despair and pleas for the end of the contest. With regard to the exchanges over general ideas, rounds 30 and 34 are particularly instructive. Although both contestants have engaged in what appear to be anti-feminist remarks along the way, Pseustis now sprouts the wings of the male chauvinist pig: women represent the destruction of men—look at Tereus and Procne and Medea. They also perform barbaric rituals. Alithia's response is instructive, for she herself blamed women on several occasions for ruining good men (rounds 18, 21, 23). But in round 30 she explodes with anger: 'Let these insults stop lest they pollute the air!' She calls Judith to her defence. It is true that she deceptively murdered Holofernes, but the rest can be left unsaid. Consider the good that she did for her people.

I would make the point that Alithia does not share Pseustis's global anti-feminism. In the next round (31), she pits Esther against Pseustis's Scylla. Both loved foreign kings, but Scylla betrayed her people to gain one, while Esther saved hers. In her entry in round 29, Alithia uses the words 'tanti sexus', 'of so great a sex' with reference to Susanna's gender. Alithia's catalogue of women consists of the good (Susanna, Esther, Judith) and the bad (Eve because she tempted Adam, Potiphar's wife for tempting Joseph, Delilah because she betrayed Samson, and Jezabel on general grounds). By contrast, Pseustis's women are either perfidious—Deianira, Phaedra, Medea, Procne—or corrupt like Da-

[28] Ed. Green, 29. In line 135 I understand 'nedum' for 'necdum' in my translation.

nae. There are no good pagan women. Obviously, Theodulus thought it better not to let Pseustis mention Penelope, Alcestis, Antigone, or Lucretia. Clearly, Pseustis's silence regarding good pagan women assists Alithia's victory, as does the latter's mention of the good Christian examples. The improvement of the weaker sex can be counted as one of the glories of Christianity—never mind that all of Theodulus's heroines are drawn from the Old Testament. Moreover, not all human disasters involving women were the fault of women. Alithia makes the point that in at least one case, that of Solomon (round 21), the man was equally to blame because of his 'love for women'. Thus I cannot concur with one assessment that the poem is typically anti-feminist,[29] nor with another, that the poem is strongly pro-feminist.[30] Rather, the message seems to be: women are naturally weak (round 29); however, women who believe in the one true God (Christian women) enjoy the possibility of overcoming their natural weakness, while the rest do not. I do not think it impossible that a woman wrote the *Ecloga*. There were women writers in the early and central Middle Ages–Duodha, Hrotswitha, Hildegard, Heloisa—and some parts of the poem are surely consistent with female authorship: the words 'of so great a sex' in reference to Susanna, the rebuke to Pseustis, 'let these insults stop lest they pollute the air', and I would add Alithia's words in round 34: 'a woman is a sweet thing to a man'. But we shall probably never know the author's sex or identity.

Before returning to the question of the authorial voice, I should like to make some general remarks about the poet's attitudes regarding Judaism and paganism. With regard to the latter, the poet might be described as 'mainstream'. All of the biblical entries are drawn from the Old Testament because it provides richer narrative material than the New, and offers obvious matches for Pseustis's pagan entries. The patriarchs and good women of the Old Testament are treated as saints 'avant la lettre'—a treatment that is wholly consistent with the teaching that Christ redeemed the virtuous heroes of the Jewish Bible when he 'descended into hell' prior to his resurrection. On the other hand, and also typically, the author distinguishes between the saintly Jews of the

[29] I. Thomson and L. Perraud (eds), *Ten Latin Schooltexts of the Later Middle Ages: Translation Selections*, Medieval Studies Volume 6, Lewiston / Queenston / Lampeter 1990, 124–126.

[30] J. Chance, *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1177*, Gainesville 1994, 347–363.

Old Testament and the perfidious Jews who refused the message of Christ. In round 25 the poet pairs a garbled account of the Olympic games, and the pain that is felt after a defeat in a sport, with the terrible destruction of the Jewish people at Megiddo. This is surely to trivialize the fate of the Jews. But note the words, 'they grieve for the laws of the noble Passover'. This strange juxtaposition might be explained as follows: Jewish law has been replaced by the law of Christ, and Christ himself has become our Passover. Christians are not entitled to mourn the passing of the Old Law any more than they should lament the end of the Olympic games—recall that the poem was written centuries before their revival. What was good in Judaism, namely its great moral examples, has already been absorbed into Christianity.

I do not think that Theodulus was quite as blasé about the passing of Graeco-Roman paganism—the aggressive eagle was viewed as more potent than the perfidious raven. By the Carolingian period, and increasingly by the eleventh century, pagan literature was penetrating the literary culture of the medieval West. Ovid's 'scurrilous' *Metamorphoses*, a text that was barely known in the Carolingian age, was steadily growing in popularity.[31] Macrobius's *Commentary* on Cicero's 'Dream of Scipio' provided new tools for the appreciation and understanding of pagan literature. Commentators such as John Scottus Eriugena showed that Greek mythology was becoming not only a popular object of study, but could also be employed as an exegetical tool. There were dangers to be seen in all this—above all, the danger that literate people might cease to think of Christian teaching as original, or else might not think of it as clearly superior to the wisdom of the ancient Greeks. Towards the end of the eleventh century—about the same time as Bernard of Utrecht was penning the first commentary on the *Ecloga*—Manegold of Lautenbach wrote his *Liber ad Wulfadum*, a grave warning regarding the dangers posed by pagan literature and liberal exegesis.[32] Although the *Ecloga* was probably written well before this time, it nonetheless appears to represent a growing realization that pagan literature was

[31] L.D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, Oxford 1983, 276–282; B. Monk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins aux XI. et XII. siècles*, vol. 2, Paris 1985, 111–181.

[32] M. Herren, 'Manegold of Lautenbach's Scholia on the Metamorphoses: Are There More?', *Notes and Queries* 249.3 [= n.s. 5.3] (2004), 218–223.

not as harmless as it purported to be. Alithia triumphed in the end, but it was a hard-won fight. Pseustis had her 'against the ropes' several times. She received the laurel wreath from Phronesis not because she sang with greater bucolic charm than her opponent, but because, in enough cases, she showed that Christian teaching was morally superior to pagan and offered the world a more hopeful message. Alithia also tried to prove that Christian women enjoyed a greater possibility of achieving moral excellence than their pagan predecessors.

In situating the *Ecloga* in its cultural context, it may also be worthwhile to note that, in addition to features shared with the *Liber ad Wulfadum* of Manegold of Lautenbach, it also might be viewed as a sort of precursor to Abelard's *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*.[33] In this work, Abelard appears to privilege philosophy, or natural reason, thus moving in a very different direction from that of either Theodulus or Manegold. I believe, however, that the important point is that debates which had long been suppressed were being opened up again, even if conclusions differed. What matters is that it was possible once again for poets and philosophers to compare conflicting religious and ideological systems in open discussion. For Theodulus, Manegold, and also Hugh of St. Victor,[34] such comparisons ended in the affirmation of Christianity's superiority; in the case of Abelard, we are left guessing. I would suggest that this openness to comparison situates Theodulus's poem at the beginning of the *Frühscholastik*, and thus, in the earlier part of the eleventh century.

We come to the end, and return to the theme of the poet as exegete. To describe the authorial voice of Theodulus, that is, the interpretive voice, is to describe the voice of a ventriloquist. The upper, or 'head' voice is the voice of Alithia allied with Phronesis: it asserts the incontrovertible truth (Alithia) that all of the tales in the Scriptures are true (because they are the Word of God), and actually happened; but there is no historical truth in pagan myth—none of the events depicted in the myths ever occurred. But the lower voice, the voice coming from the belly, is the voice of Pseustis, powerfully pleading his case that pagan myths contain 'involucra', hidden truths—moral lessons that are often as solid as any that Christianity has to offer. Because Theodulus

[33] Edition: R. Thomas, *Petrus Abaelardus. Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudaeum et Christianum*, Stuttgarrt–Bad Cannstatt 1970. Translation: P.J. Payer, *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, Toronto 1979.

[34] See especially Hugh of St. Victor's *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* 1.8.11.

is an excellent ventriloquist, the lower voice is very seductive indeed. Even the most highly critical listener, straining to detect signs of falsehood, can be deceived. As I have attempted to show, Pseustis is the clear winner of some rounds, because the message of his narrative—the 'involucrum'—is either more moral or offers more hope than Alithia's. Is Theodulus therefore to be designated as subversive because Alithia was not allowed to win every round? Or was she intended to triumph only because her biblical examples are true 'secundum litteram'? We shall probably never be able to solve this puzzle. Even if we could identify the 'real' Theodulus, dig him—or her—up from the grave, and interview the person before television cameras, we probably would not learn the truth. Poets are notorious liars. And I suspect that a poet using a pseudonym has more in common with Pseustis than he or she would wish us to think.

APPENDIX

The Eclogue of Theodulus

Prologue (lines 1–36)

The torrid summer now scorches Ethiopian lands, while the golden axis of the sun turns in the sign of Cancer. The shepherd called Pseustis, his body covered in a motley panther skin and his rigid cheeks inflated with a pipe, drives his she-goats beneath the shade of the linden, as he sends forth the sound of a thousand tones through the opening of his instrument. At a fountain nearby Alithia, a most beautiful young maid sprung from the lineage of David, is pasturing her sheep and holding a zither as she plays by the waves of the river. Overcome by the sweetness of the music, the river is transfixed as though harking to the sounds of the modulating plectrum, and the bleating flock happily ignores its fodder. Pseustis could not endure the sight, but agitated by the bile of anxiety, called from a safe point to the opposite shore: 'Why, Alithia, do you sing these stupid songs to mute beasts? If you're looking for a victory, you can compete with me. If you win, I shall yield my pipe for your use; but if you are beaten, you will give me your zither. Let's make a fair bargain.' But she replied: 'Neither do your words move me, nor your rewards entice me, because I am gnawed by a single care: However things turn out, if you are beaten, you will not admit that I

won, unless a witness be present for the entire time. But because the decision of our contest should not be altered, look, our friend Phronesis is coming to water her flock and give it relief from the heat; let her sit as an umpire for our duel.' To these words Pseustis replied: 'I see that Fortune offered her freely. Approach, Phronesis, for there is plenty of daylight, so that you may postpone serious matters in favour of our sport.' Then Phronesis replied: 'Even though both of my parents bade me to hasten home as soon as the flock is watered—nor do I doubt that if I tarry even a bit I shall be punished—I shall make bold and accept the pleasure of such a contest. Pseustis, you go first because you are the man. She will follow you with equal zeal. Let the tetrad, the number of Pythagoras,[35] limit your discourse. I pray that the sun will lengthen the time.'

Round 1 (lines 37–44)

P. First came Saturn from the shores of Crete, spreading the Golden Age through all the lands. He had no father, nor was anyone his elder; the golden offspring of the gods rejoice in their ancestor.

A. The first man inhabited a green garden until, persuaded by his spouse, he drank the viper's poison and thereby mixed drinks of death for all. To this day the children feel what their parents bequeathed them.

Round 2 (lines 37–44)

P. Jupiter, who could not endure the splendour of so much gold, cruelly expelled his father by taking up arms. A discoloured image of the world followed in silver, and the council of the gods gave it pride of place.

A. The first creation, expelled from its hallowed spot, went into exile, and ashes changed nature's ornament into ashes. And lest others be polluted by the immortal trunk of the apple tree, a flaming sword in front of the gates keeps out those who might enter.

[35] The poet seems to be mistaken here. Pythagoras's term is 'tetraktys', which refers to the sum of the first four numbers, i.e. 10, the perfect number.

Round 3 (lines 53–60)

P. Famous Cecrops, who was the first to render the inwards of an ox with a sword, originated sacrifice and established rites for Jupiter which posterity followed. He founded Athens, and Pallas assisted with her name.

A. Cain sacrificed before God with the seed of his crops. His just brother Abel gave an acceptable gift, freely offering a lamb—such a victim befits Christ. He perished by his brother's sword and speaks after the rituals of death.

Round 4 (lines 61–68)

P. Arcadian Lycaon provoked the anger of heaven, attempting to deceive Jupiter's godhead when the god appeared as a guest in his house. Jove stripped him of his human body and face, and now a wild wolf rages in the fields.

A. Enoch, reverer of justice in a polluted world, was taken from the earth never to be seen again. An athlete of God believing in the second coming of the Judge, he will precede Elias his comrade against the Leviathan.

Round 5 (lines 69–76)

P. A whirlpool came out of the Ocean submerging all things. The land yielded to the water and all that lived perished. Deucalion, the sole survivor along with his wife Pyrrha, renewed the human race by throwing stones.

A. The rightful vengeance of God burst apart from the founts of the abyss, preserving Noah as the eighth in the partitions of the ark. Out of the clouds Iris appeared to human view to show that the ages would not suffer such a calamity again.

Round 6 (lines 77–84)

P. The boy Ganymede was chasing hares on Ida when the standard-bearer of Jove bore him to the aether above. The ranks of the gods granted to the stolen boy the title of cupbearer which Hebe had possessed earlier.

A. All the animals condemn the raven for its perfidy because it would

not be the messenger of safety to those shut in. But the dove brought a branch of green olives in its mouth into the ark—Armenia remains a witness.

Round 7 (lines 85–92)

P. Created from their mother earth, men rose up in revolt; there was a single will in all to expel the gods. Mountain was heaped upon mountain, but Jupiter using the bolt of Vulcan threw down all his foes and cast them into a cave.

A. On the high citadel of Babylon the scions of Adam built a tower which would be able to touch the sky. God is aroused with anger. He confounds their tongues and scatters them in all directions; the name of the city survives.

Round 8 (lines 93–100)

P. When Paeon was struck down, Apollo condemned the Cyclopes to death because they made the thunderbolts at the behest of Jove. But soon, stripped of his own divinity by the anger of the gods, he undertook the care of Admetus's sheep.

A. Abram, commanded to leave his native land, took Sarah to wife without hope of offspring. At length a lordly heir is conceived for the coupled exhausted by age, and she whom nature had burdened gave suck.

Round 9 (lines 101–108)

P. Daedalus cut through the clear air on fitted wings. His son follows suit, but the fragile wax is dissolved and he falls into the sea—the tide groaned beneath the weight. Daedalus, staying composed, reached the frozen Arctic.

A. Abraham would not have been hindered by the beauty of his offspring from sacrificing his son, had not a voice from above ordered him to be sparing. A ram, whose horns had been stuck in a thornbush, is seized; the offspring follows his father.

Round 10 (lines 109–116)

P. Phyllis, overcome with love for proud Demophon, in tears exchanges the rigid cork-tree for her own body. But he returns and, lying on his back, bathes the trunk with his lips. Phyllis, as if sensing the kisses, responds to him with leaves.

A. Divine power, dissolving Sodom into ashes, thought to spare Lot on account of his alliance with his uncle (Abraham). Segor provides safety, but a treacherous wife is turned into a statue of salt; animals lick the rock (of salt).

Round 11 (lines 117–124)

P. Venus warring against the Argive forces sustained a grave wound at the hand of Diomedes. His comrades rue the deeds of their furious leader; turned into birds, they sharpen claws instead of teeth.

A. Jacob, struggling against the Lord in a long contest, lost the ligaments of his thigh, since he did not know how to yield. As if to atone for the wound which the parent had suffered, the whole line of grandsons did not eat the nerve of the thigh.

Round 12 (lines 125–132)

P. Hippolytus perished because a cruel step-mother accused him: he was pulled apart by his horses when the waves cast up sea-monsters (literally, sea-dogs', 'seals'). Diana's wrath did not endure the assaults on his chastity. She calls him back, and now called Virbius he lives on.

A. Joseph, sold into slavery through the jealousy of his brethren, is consigned to chains after spurning the entreaties and threats of the passionate queen. He interprets the dreams of the king, and the kingdom of Egypt is made subject to him.

Round 13 (lines 133–140)

P. Cadmus was the first of the Greeks to invent letters after sewing in the ground the seven-headed Hydra's teeth, which fortune submerged, I hardly need say, for a sinister fate. Lest Cadmus suffer the same he hissed that he too was a dragon.

A. Moses, snatched from the waters, drove out the magical arts. The entire land watered by the Nile feared him. He led out his people,

submerging the enemy in the waves. The Red Sea is still witness to the rout of the Egyptians.

Round 14 (lines 141–148)

P. Europa's beauty roused the hot marrow of Jove and turned the covering of divinity into the shape of a bull. Escaping the weapons of Agenor after the girl had been raped, he gave her name to that (place) which a third part of the world holds (Europe).

A. From Aaron's fingers fire and gold made that famous calf; the rebel throng became frenzied. After the scion of Levi repressed the anger of the Lord, a priestly fillet was granted to him as his perennial right.

Round 15 (lines 149–156)

P. O priest Amphiareus, you suffer for a suborned wife, while a pearl neckless glistens on her covetous breast. A cave appearing suddenly from deep Acheron engulfs you, and the right hand of your orphaned offspring slays her in darkness.

A. Korah's wretched fate warns him to obey his betters; hell receives him whom the dry earth devours. But God himself secretly buried Moses, granting it to no man to discover his tomb.

Round 16 (lines 157–164)

P. Io, tormented by a horsefly sent by Juno, is crowned with horns and assigned to the protection of Argos. Oppressed by cruel bristles, she lows instead of speaking until she is restored to her previous form.

A. Balaam in anger presses the she-ass with spurs; an angel meets him and forces the beast to stop. O terrifying event! The voice of the animal is released, and she utters words which humans are accustomed to speak.

Round 17 (lines 165–172)

P. Bright Phoebe doubled the length of the sweet night so that Jove might have time to enjoy Amphitryon's chamber. Hercules, born from Alcmena to a stepmother's chagrin, forthwith strangles the serpents sent to attack him.

A. Phoebus, at Joshua's command, stood still at the peak of heaven, so that living courage might never fail the victorious race as they fought at Gabaon. From this all may learn what the rewards of holy faith can be.

Round 18 (lines 173–180)

P. Hercules' club despoiled the vigilant dragon, stole the splendour of Geryon and destroyed the hydra. Cacus yielded to him, as did the guardian of Hell. In the end Deianira his bedmate burned him to death.

A. Samson, his limbs covered in the spoils of a lion, scattered a thousand men, destroyed fields with foxes, raised up the gates of a city and burst the bonds with his sinews. In the end Delilah, through a ruse, cut off his hair.

Round 19 (lines 181–188)

P. O names of a thousand gods, defend your poet—you who dwell in Hades, you in the starry regions, you in the tracts of the world, and you in the pools of the sounding abyss. O names of a thousand gods, defend your poet.

A. O one and only God, majesty, glory, power, that which was, is, and shall be praises and serves you, in whom there are three persons, three names. O you without end, you without beginning, grant that we conquer falsehood.

Round 20 (lines 189–196)

P. Orpheus, as he played his songs through the groves, caused the leafless ash trees to follow him. Proserpina bade the rulers of Acheron, moved by his music, to restore Eurydice on a harsh condition.

A. (David), a harp-playing boy, helped a king (Saul) with the music of his strings so that a cruel ravager (insomnia) would not injure his body. The hand of him whose job it was to shear the fleece of sheep succeeded in a short time to the sceptre.

Round 21 (lines 197–204)

P. Mercury the hero extracted juices from plants and used his wand to rescue from the shadows those plants deprived of light. He was so potent in his craft that you might think all things proclaim that he, the child of Maia, was nursed at the breast of Juno.

A. Solomon was favoured by the Almighty because he sought the gifts of wisdom so diligently that he excelled the uses of nature. Endowed with talent he embellished the citadel with a temple, but the love of women destroyed the man covered in wealth.

Round 22 (lines 205–212)

P. When Dordonian Gnosia was shaking the sparse clusters of grapes, Ceres the bountiful mother pitied those about to perish from hunger, and sent Triptolemus to the world with a serpent as his servant; for the first time the earth was shown the hope of a harvest.

A. Elias squeezed shut the sky's clouds with his prayers so that no rain would drip down on the crops. Driven from his native soil, the prophet drank from a torrent; the food which a friendly raven brought him sufficed.

Round 23 (lines 213–220)

P. At the sight of a Gorgon a mortal is transformed, because those who behold her become rigid like stones. After the monster was slain through Athena's trick, Bellerophon combed the feathers of his horse and launched himself into the air.

A. Jezabel hindered Elias's escape from the earth when the fiery chariot appeared, pulled in different ways by the horses. But the flaming chariot came and lifted up the prophet; the spirit of the heir (Eliseus) is made double through the love of the mentor.

Round 24 (lines 221–228)

P. Tithonus, deemed worthy by Aurora to share her splendid bed chamber, had his life span increased, but in the end became a cicada. She buried their child Memnon, who died at faraway Troy; numerous birds celebrate his yearly feasts.

A. King Ezechiel, condemned to death, washed his face in life-giving

water and postponed the hour of his fate. So as not to doubt that he merited rescue, the panting sun reversed the reins of its path.

Round 25 (lines 229–236)

P. He who first inaugurated the games at the foot of Mt. Olympus (sic!) exceeds the praises of men. The hard-won laurel wreath shades the hair of victors; a procession brings them home. Discomfiture falls upon the vanquished.

A. The towns of Juda mourn the fate of Josiah; fountains and trees shun the fields of Megiddo. On account of his death they grieve for the laws and the noble Passover—thus his entire generation, but especially Jeremiah.

Round 26 (lines 237–244)

P. Salmoneus, as he runs through the fields of Elis with his terrifying lamp, simulates thunder and hurls lightning bolts. Jove, his enemy, not tolerating the arms of a rival, cast him down on the middle of a bridge with his menacing fire.

A. (Nebuchadnezzar), the king of Assyria, knowing no God but himself, endured the dews and rains over seven harvests. A beast is made man, and all believe in it; may they learn to be content with the powers of nature.

Round 27 (lines 245–252)

P. What cause compels the horses of Phoebus to delay? Will the ages have to re-learn the disaster wrought by Phaethon? Why, evening star, do you linger? The meadows have sated the she-goats, all of the cattle are chewing, but Phoebus fails to move on.

A. The light of the sun, its habits fixed at the very beginning, serves human vision. Why do you summon the night? What do you want? Are you trying to trick me? Your sighs betray that your powers are deserting you.

Round 28 (lines 253–260)

P. Acrisius, fearing lest the beauty of his famous child be violated, barred the gates of his tower with locks. But the adulterer poured rain over the rooves into the lap of the virgin, and Danae was debauched by his gold.

A. Daniel was protected by God. The wrath of lions did not scathe the man cast into their den, although they were hungry. Habakuk, riding through the kingdom on a goat, brought him food, even though the doors were sealed.

Round 29 (lines 261–268)

P. Latona's offspring (Diana) bids Niobe, 'Burn incense on the hearth if you wish to keep your children safe.' From the shoulder of the threefold goddess hang a thousand arrows and as many bowstrings, meant for vengeance against the loquacious woman.

A. Neither old age nor the virtue of so great a sex could restrain the passions of the priests. But though she saw the fate of her death closing in, Susanna subdued the law which nature gave.

Round 30 (lines 269–276)

P. The robust mind of the male is destroyed by the fickleness of females. They extract the hippomanes (an aphrodisiac) and bloody their members when they taste it. The cruel house of Tereus knows what a woman can do. Medea knows too, having killed her own children in a horrible slaughter.

A. Let these insults stop lest they pollute the air. The leader Holofernes learned to dread the power of women when he was overcome with passion for the noble widow (Judith). The Assyrians lament that he put his trust in a woman.

Round 31 (lines 277–284)

P. Scylla burned with desire for Minos who tormented her entrails. She deprived her aged father (Nisus) of his scarlet hair. But spurned by her lover, and goaded with a beak, she assumes feathers. Her father pursues her everywhere; the air crackles with the sound of curved claws.

A. The beauty of Edissa (Esther) moved the ruler of the Persians and

Medes (Ahasuerus), who was annoyed by the haughty tone of his wife (Vashti). The captive (Esther) merited to be placed on Vashti's throne, removing the prince's blow against her people.

Round 32 (lines 285–292)

P. The meadows are green, the groves are in leaf, now all things laugh. O Helicon, send the muses hither; O Proteus, send the Napaeans to me. Let those ones especially come, if they still care for the flowers of Tempe. O Ennius, send me the ones whom you weave in your distichs (the twelve Olympian gods).

A. Fear and pleasure fashion the causes of error. If the abyss has its gods, and likewise the sky, if the world has its own, as does the sea, what remains except to say that you confess as many gods as you have body parts?

Round 33 (lines 293–300)

P. Of their own accord the bulls seek to go back to the barns. The evening drives the sheep from the clover and the she-goats from the elm. Unless you return early, the wolf will lay traps for the lambs. Yield, O day, to the sky, since the maiden knows not how to yield.

A. O sheep, if the wolf frightens you returning to your pens, with raised horns, my charges, attack him whom the good paschal Lamb vanquished with no deceit. O day, hold fast your course, lest the maiden let go of her victory.

Round 34 (lines 301–308)

P. The sight of Helen in the stars is bitter for those at sea. Blight is bitter to the crops, the hissing serpents to the field. The mole digs up the gardens, the nettle burns the finger. Who of the gods desired to vex all things so much?

A. A woman is a sweet thing to a man, rain is sweet to the parched fields. Mandrake is sweet to the sterile, the fount, to a farmer's thirst. But after souls strip off the veils of the flesh, it is best for all that the wrath of the Judge be appeased.

Round 35 (lines 309–316)

P. What cruel desire turned the hearts of the gods? Has perfect order deserted the zodiac? Do all the gods snore, or do they swallow draughts from Lethe? Yield, O day, to the sky, since the maiden knows not how to yield.

A. With ever-watchful gaze he cares for the heights of heaven and whatever the ground nurtures, or the abyss creates. Nor does he who made all things with the Word know sleep. O day, hold fast your course, lest the maiden let go of her victory.

Round 36 (lines 317–324)

P. Answer me this: when Proserpina approached the places of woe on her mother's condition about the right of return, who betrayed with his mouth the first taste of her perfidy? (Ascalaphus). Answer me and you will be praised for knowing the secret place of Troy (the Palladium).

A. Answer me this: when the sea subsides from the world, and the world from the heaven, and in the middle floating air remains, where does the earth surpass the light axis of the sky? Answer me this and I agree that you can pronounce the tetragram of God (Yhwh = Yahweh).[36]

Round 37 (lines 325–332)

P. If this one through her skills prevails against me, I shall suffer like Calchas when he yielded to Mopsus (i.e. by dying). But I shall not allow myself to be beaten by a girl's tricks. I'll repeat this a thousand times, unless the evening star subtract an hour.

A. Now, Thales, fashioner of lies, would that you were here! But I shall rely chiefly on the four books of evangelical discourse about how God received our body from a virgin, nor will such labour weigh me down.[37]

[36] For a Jew, the pronunciation of the holy name constituted blasphemy. By implication, if Alithia were a Jewess (which she scarcely could have been), she could have been seen as tempting Pseustis to an act of self-destruction!

[37] Note the pun on 'gravabat': 'weigh down' / 'make pregnant'.

Round 38 (lines 333–344)

P. Phronesis, for the love of Mercury, to whom, according to Martianus (Capella), you joined your splendid daughter (Philology) through the great power of the gods, bid your sister (Alithia) be silent. Let her go where she likes. I yield, and will not deny that I yielded.

Ph. God has freely conferred upon you that which all mortals struggle to obtain (divine grace), and, if they achieve it, they have no care for life's dangers; your opponent requests that you, now beaten, will wish to yield. The Thracian poet (Orpheus) moved the shades with his lyre; may tears move you. Now Phoebe raises her horns; the sun seeks Ocean, the dark cool follows. Desist from the remainder, so as not to be injured by despair.

EPIC POETRY AS EXEGESIS: 'THE SONG OF THE GOOD WAR' (*EUPOLEMIUS*)

K. Smolak

The fact that Virgil was not only the author of the Roman national epic, but was also believed to have foretold Christ's birth in his Fourth Eclogue,[1] had a tremendous impact on the Latin-speaking cultural area concerning both the evaluation of the epic genre and the literary production of the Christian poets in Late Antiquity. Otherwise, the biblical epic which up to the baroque period proved to be highly effective[2] would either not have originated at all or would have been less prolific.[3] Within Christian epics of Late Antiquity, a special position is held by the oldest allegorical-historical epic of world-literature, the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius.[4] Contrary to the biblical epics of a Iuvencus or Sedulius, in this battle inside the human being the actions are not carried out by biblical characters: female allegories of virtues and vices compete against each other in duels, each virtue winning and defeating her respective enemy. Thus the old epic structure of *monomachiae* is applied in series just like in the *Thebaid* of Statius. So, on a liter-

[1] The oldest and well known testimony is offered in the speech in which the emperor Constantine addressed the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea in 325, the so called *Oratio Constantini ad sanctorum coetum* 19–21, ed. I. v. Heikel, *Eusebius, Werke I*, Leipzig 1902, 154–192 (esp. 181–187); see also C. Monteleone, in: *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* I, Rome 1984, 913–915, s.v. Costantino.

[2] Still of fundamental value for the genre of biblical epic are the following monographs: R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike. Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, München 1975; D. Kartschoke, *Bibeldichtung. Studien zur Geschichte der epischen Bibelparaphrase von Juvencus bis Otfried von Weißenburg*, München 1975; M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*, Liverpool 1985; see also F. Stella (ed.), *La scrittura infinita. Bibbia e poesia in età medievale e umanistica*, Florence 2001.

[3] It is worth pointing out that, apart from the hexametric 'Paraphrase of the Psalms', ascribed to Apollinaris of Laodicea, the *Metabole* of the Gospel of St. John by Nonnos and the *Homerocentra* composed by the empress Eudocia and others, there was no 'Homerus Christianus', who would have exerted a long lasting influence on Byzantine Literature.

[4] For this dimension of the *Psychomachia* see K. Smolak, 'Die Psychomachie des Prudentius als historisches Epos', in: M. Salvadore (ed.), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale*, Alessandria 2001, 125–148.

ary higher level, that is to say in an allegorical treatment of the epic basic motif of 'battle', the *Psychomachia* christianizes the epic genre and makes it reflect the political view of its author, namely that the Roman empire, as shaped by Theodosius, was to prepare the future period of Messianic salvation. In addition, Prudentius' *Psychomachia* surpasses Virgil's *Aeneid* by not only describing the events preceding the foundation of a city, but rather by depicting in its final part the foundation of an allegorical city: the highest virtue, *fides*, together with the other virtues, transforms each Roman citizen, that is to say each catholic, into a temple of Christ, reflecting both the heavenly Jerusalem of the Apocalypse and earthly Rome.[5] Prudentius stresses his intention to form a contrast with Virgil and Statius, not only by using alienated or overtrumping quotations,[6] but above all by presenting exclusively female fighters: in epics of classical antiquity characters like Virgil's Camilla (*Aen.* 11.432–831) are an exception to the rule and in the various mentions of the 'Amazonomachia' in Greek epic poetry (e.g. *Il.* 3.184–190; 6.186) the female fighters make up just one of the two parties. Moreover, the female allegories reduce the possibilities of actions apart from fighting considerably. For allegories of abstract notions in Late Antiquity usually do not have families or relatives, that is to say, they lack the definite human scenario of a real myth.

This attitude of contrasting the epic of classical antiquity indeed was quite appropriate for the fourth century, the epoch of the cultural confrontation between Christianity and paganism. In medieval times, after the fall of paganism, however, it was not of immediate interest any longer. To a certain degree an epic with fighting female allegories like the *Psychomachia*, though always highly esteemed, could even be

[5] Instances are given in Smolak (n. 4), 131–132.

[6] E.g. in Ps. 1, *Christe, graves hominum semper miserate labores* Prudentius quotes almost verbally a line of Aeneas' prayer to Apollo in Virgil, Aen. 6,56: *Phoebe, gravis Troiae semper miserate labores*; in substituting only two words, however, he enlarges the field of the prayer's validity from a certain group, the people of Troy, to mankind as a whole, according to the global concept of Christianity in contrast to the limited favours of pagan gods.—Towards the end of the Psychomachia Prudentius, borrowing a clausula from Statius, Theb. 11,100, *discordibus armis*, points out the contrast between the real weapons of the heroic epic and those with which good and evil fight against each another "inside the by no means simple nature of man." By the way: it is certainly the line in Statius, Prudentius makes us of, not the one in Virgil, who has the same clausula in Georg. 2,459, since the former, being preceded by the mention of two allegoric figures, *Fides* and *Pietas*, obviously offers a more suitable basis for a sophisticated quotation in an allegorical epic.

considered a deficiency that was to be eliminated in the process of the complete reception of classical epic which began in the Carolingian era.[7] A real myth had to be created, something the genre of biblical epic could not offer in a complex sense. For the characters especially of the New Testament were not considered mythological and the events on the narrative level were already fixed, leaving scarcely any room for poetic invention on a larger scale. On the other hand, the characters and events of the Old Testament are in some respect a different matter. For in Christian exegesis they had been treated in the same way as the Homeric epics had been dealt with by the Stoics and even long before, that is, by typological and allegorical explanation[8] respectively. Thus a very similar function to that attributed to the events reported in the Old Testament was allotted to the myths reported in pagan epics. They were considered as veils of truths that had to be revealed by allegorical interpretation.[9] For Virgil this kind of interpretation had already been carried out by Servius and Fulgentius in Late Antiquity, for the Old Testament it was accomplished through the exegesis of various ecclesiastical writers. So the Middle Ages had these two bases to start from. Two examples for this procedure can be added, one for the myth, the other for the Old Testament. In his 45th poem, entitled *De libris quos legere solebam et qualiter fabulae poetarum a philosophis mystice pertractentur*, Theodulf of Orléans mentions his way of reading the classic poets, namely in terms of allegory. By doing so, he says, the veil (*tegmen*) can be removed and the truth (*vera*) contained in ancient poetry, can be detected.[10] Referring to the epic production, this means that it seemed basically possible to replace the female allegories of Prudentius by male characters, thereby achieving the impression of a 'genuine' epic with male heroes.

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[7] See D. Schaller, 'Vergil und die Wiederentdeckung des Epos im frühen Mittelalter', *MR* 1 (1987) 75–100.

[8] For general information see H. Cancik-Lindemaier–D. Sigel, 'Allegorese', in: *Der Neue Pauly* 1, Stuttgart–Weimar 1996, 518–523; Ch. Walde, 'Allegorie', ibidem 523–525; K. Pollmann, 'Allegorische Dichtung [II. lateinisch]', ibidem 525–526.—It is interesting that one of the earliest allegorical interpretations of a Homeric scene deals with the battle between the gods (θεῶν μάχη), which was allegorized as a fight between good and evil, κακιῶν πρὸς ἀρετάς, as we are told in a scholion to Il. 20,67 Dindorf.

[9] For this metaphor and its application in medieval Latin literature see the recent voluminous monograph of F. Bezner, *Vela veritatis. Wissen und Sprache in der Intellectual History des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden–Boston 2005.

[10] Theodulf, *carm.* 45,20–22 (MGH, poet. 1,543–544): *plurima sub falso tegmine vera latent. / falsa poetarum stilus affert, vera sophorum: / falsa horum in verum vertere saepe solent.*

Concerning the Old Testament we can find similar terminology. The famous so-called chalice of Wilten, created between 1160 and 1170 and now kept in Vienna's Museum of Art-History,[11] bears a Latin inscription, in which the Old Testament is compared to a veil (*tegumentum*), under which the New Law, that is to say the truth of the New Testament hides.[12] So pagan myths like Virgil's epic or the figure of Cupid of Ovid's love-poetry[13] and the Old Testament are basically put on the very same level: both need allegorical interpretation. After earlier centuries had maintained the opposition of original biblical truth and its presumed pagan deformation, this changed attitude,—stressed in the so called *Ecloga Theoduli*,[14]—finally led to a complete equation of both fields as suppliers of material for *exempla* for certain virtues and vices in the Twelfth Canto of Dante's *Purgatorio*.[15] An intermediate stage can be found in a treatise on poetics attributed to Bernardus Silvestris, in which we discover a remarkable modification in so far as the concept of *figura*, the technical term for the Greek τύπος, and *involucrum*, an other expression for veil, are equated. *Figura* and *involucrum* come to be subdivided into *allegoria* and *integumentum*. In the course of this subdivision *allegoria* is understood as a historically true event that harbours a deeper sense behind the exterior façade of events, whereas *integumentum* on the other hand is used for a mythological narrative and its philosophical interpretation which, however, claims to be true as well.[16] *Allegoria* thus is applied to the Old Testament, *integumentum* belongs to classical myths. In spite of this artificial linguistic differentiation both terms point to the

[11] For the inscription see K. Smolak, 'Philologisches zu mittellateinischen Inschriften des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien', in: G. Dobesch–E. Weber (edd.), *Römische Geschichte, Altertumskunde und Epigraphik (Festschrift für Artur Betz zur Vollendung seines 80. Lebensjahres)*, Vienna 1985, 575–589 (esp. 576–583).

[12] Inventory number 8924; the verses in question (engraved in capital letters on the upper fringe of the foot of the chalice) read as follows: *In testamento veteri quasi sub tegumento / clausa latet nova lex, novus in cruce quam reserat rex.*

[13] In his above mentioned *carmen* 45 Theodulf, among other myths, refers explicitly to Virgil's Cacus-episode (thereby following Fulgentius) and Ovid's Cupid from the opening elegy of the *Amores* (24; 33–52).

[14] Now excellently published by F. Mosetti-Casaretto, *Teodulo, Ecloga. Il canto della verità e della menzogna*, Florence 1997 (with Italian translation and notes). See also the contribution by Herren in this volume.

[15] *Purgatorio* 12,1–72; for a detailed interpretation see F. Barth–W. Naumann, *Dante Alighieri, Die göttliche Komödie, Erläuterungen*, Darmstadt 2003, 238–243.

[16] Ed. H.J. Westra, *The Commentary on Martianus Capella, De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii, Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, Toronto 1986, 23–33.

same way of interpretation, being subsumed, as said before, under the term of Christian exegesis, *figura*.

These preliminary statements concerning both history and theory of a certain aspect of literary production seem to be essential for understanding the very piece of poetry which constitutes the topic of this article, the epic of the 'Good War', *Eupolemius*.[17] In spite of its close relation to a number of biblical books this epic can neither be understood as a paraphrastic biblical epic, nor as a merely allegorical epic, since 'real' human fighters, male heroes, are acting in it. First some external facts: the poem, consisting of two books of a total of 1464 hexameters, is preserved in two manuscripts from the later 12th and the 13th centuries respectively, both originating from St. Peter's Abbey near Merseburg in Eastern Germany.[18] The author might well have been German. The Greek title, *Eupolemius*, in my opinion, has nothing to do with the author's name, but, on the basis of its Greek components, *eu* and *polemos*, and of Jerome mentioning a Hellenistic historian called Eupolemos (*vir. ill.* 38), denotes the historical narration of a 'good war'. For in numerous battle scenes the fight between good and evil is described, carried out by human warriors and ending with the victory of the Messiah, who refuses to fight and sacrifices himself, like the Roman heroes P. Decius Mus and Q. Atilius Regulus, who are mentioned by name (2.588–589). The various battles reflect the ancient enmity of two beings, *Agatus* and *Cacus*. The Greek name *Agatus*, ἀγαθός erroneously written with a *t* instead of a *th*, clearly refers

[17] Ed. K. Manitius, *Eupolemius. Das Bibelgedicht*, Weimar 1973 (MGH, Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 9). Essential secondary literature: Th. Gärtner, 'Zu den dichterischen Quellen und zum Text der allegorischen Bibeldichtung des Eupolemius', *DA* 58,2 (2002) 549–562; idem, 'Zum spätantiken und mittelalterlichen Nachwirken der Dichtungen des Alcimus Avitus', *FML* 9 (2002) 109–221 (esp. 194–196); Ch. Ratkowitsch, 'Der Eupolemius—ein Epos aus dem Jahre 1096?', *FML* 6–7 (1999–2000) 215–271; D. Schaller, 'La poesia epica', in: G. Cavallo–C. Leonardi–E. Menestò, *Lo spazio letterario del Medioevo I 2*, Rome 1993, 9–42 (esp. 23–25); J. Ziolkowski, 'Eupolemiana', *MlJb* 26 (1991) 117–132; idem, 'The Eupolemius', *JML* 1 (1991) 1–45 (general remarks and English translation).—For a discussion of the meaning of the neologism *Eupolemius* see Ratkowitsch 217–218.—It has not been taken into consideration so far that the author seems to follow what Servius demands in connection with the Aeneid (6,752), namely that the title of a piece of literature, especially of an epic, should refer to the work as a whole (see B.-J. Schröder, *Titel und Text*, Berlin–New York 1999, 30).

[18] The manuscripts containing the *Eupolemius* are: B (Besançon, Bibliothèque Municipale 536, 1^{v}–21^{r}), and D (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dc. 171^{a}), a copy of B.

to God, who according to a word of Jesus, is "the only good one" (Lc 18:19). The name *Cacus*, misunderstood as 'evil', was taken from Fulgentius' interpretation of the Virgilian monster from the Aventine hill.[19] It was already Fulgentius who confused Virgil's Cacus and the Greek adjective κακόν, not paying attention to the different quantities of the respective first syllables. So the *Eupolemius* starts with two outstanding male characters whose natures are so contrary to one another that a conflict seems inevitable—a situation which befits epic poetry according to Horace's definition of this genre in his *Ars poetica* (*epist.* 2.3.73):[20] Agatus, considered king of Jerusalem, the Holy City, has a series of generals down to the Messiah, his son, at his service; Cacus, on the other hand, rules in Babylon which already in the Old Testament and still in Augustine's *City of God* was the symbol of everything hostile to God.[21] Contrary to Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, in which the human body acts as the battlefield,[22] in the *Eupolemius* all fights are clearly located in the area of Jerusalem. This localization, indicated at the very beginning, is complemented by a chronological allusion at the end: the fights, we are told, took place long before the Romans captured Jerusalem, now called Helia, that is, Aelia Capitolina, the name given by Hadrian after the cruel repression of the rebellion of Bar Kochba in 131 A.D.[23] So both place and time, essential elements for a historical epic, are given. Additionally, a number of τόποι in the proem of the poem make it clear that the author claims to offer a genuine historical epic.[24] Moreover, the character of the poem as panegyric praise of a victorious leader is

[19] Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* 2,3,42–43 Helm (interpreting Verg. *Aen.* 8,193–267).

[20] The exposition of the narrative is similar to that of the *Iliad* 1,6–7 (Agamemnon vs. Achilles) und of Statius, *Theb.* 1,1–3 (Eteocles vs. Polyneices).

[21] Aug., *civ.* 17,16 calls Babylon the *civitas diaboli*. It is worth noting that even in the *Ludus de Antichristo*, a liturgical play from the age of emperor Frederic I. Barbarossa, written in the Bavarian monastery of Tegernsee, Babylon, totally opposed to Jerusalem, is the residence of the pagan (that is to say the Islamic) kingdom (see G. Günther, *Der Antichrist. Ein mittelalterliches Drama*, Hamburg 1970, 159).

[22] For the problem of the localization of the battlefield see Ch. Gnilka, *Studien zur Psychomachie des Prudentius*, Wiesbaden 1963, 8–18.

[23] Closely following Orosius, *hist.* 7,13,5, Isidorus, *orig.* 15,1,5, and Beda, *de locis sanctis* 1 (= Eucherius, *de situ Hierosolymitanae urbis* 125,7 [CSEL 39]), the author of the *Eupolemius*, at the end of his poem (2,771–773), informs the readers that the fights he described took place long before Jerusalem was called by its actual name *Helia* and before Golgotha was included into the urban precinct, surrounded by a wall.

[24] In 1,5–6 the author refuses to invoke the Muse of historiography (!), Clio, or Calliope, the Muse of the beautiful voice, both responsible for a well done historical epic, and asks the *summa sophya*, that is Christ himself, to inspire his poem.

explicitly pointed out,[25] a feature Servius attributed to the *Aeneid*,[26] for the later Latin tradition the epic par excellence.

Well, with which literary means does the poet meet his claim raised in the proem? First of all by eliminating the before mentioned deficiency of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, to which, by the way, he alludes in different instances and by way of various methods. He creates new mythological characters based on the report of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament, without following the latter so closely as a paraphrastic biblical epic would have done. This procedure, even applied to some characters of the New Testament, had been made possible by the basic equivalence of the Old Testament and mythology, as outlined above. Thus the author of the *Eupolemius* achieves the distance required between his poetic *inventio* and the reports of the Old Testament by endowing his characters with names partly invented at random and chiefly Greek, as befits a myth according to the classical tradition. Some examples will suffice.[27] Epic style is imitated first by patronymics. So the Messiah, son of Agatus, is called Agatides, the author's own creation in analogy to patronymics like Alcides, Laertiades, Imbrasides etc. The fact that his knowledge of Greek was sufficient to form linguistically correct Greek proper names and that in doing so he isolated his characters by these new names from the Old-Testament report, can be proved by the following instance: the emissaries of Agatus—delegates being part of the epic staff since the *Iliad*[28]—to a man called Iuda, a personification of the Jewish people, are named Amphicopas and Pulipater, which means "the circumcised one" and "the father of many", respectively. Both names apply to Abraham, who was the first to practise circumcision on himself (Gen 17:26) and was promised numerous offspring in Gen 17:4 and 22:17. But circumcision in Latin is *circumcisio*, in Greek περιτομή. Consequently, the Greek compound 'Amphicopas',

[25] 1,10–11: *laudem / ut possim cantare tuam, nam te duce bellum / hoc gestum est victusque dolet te presule Cacus*.

[26] In the preface to his commentary on the Aeneid Servius writes: *Intentio Vergilii haec est, imitari Homerum et Augustum laudare a parentibus* (4,10–11 Thilo).

[27] Here I may grasp the occasion to insert a correction on behalf of scientific honesty: both the making and the meaning of Greek names that occur in the *Eupolemius* as well as a couple of other observations which Ratkowitsch presents in her article (n. 17) have been suggested by the author of this contribution in a paper given in Vienna already in the autumn of 1987. It seems justifiable to publish this article so as to express my demand for the clarification of intellectual property.

[28] The author was probably familiar with the famous delegation sent to Achilles in *Iliad* 9, shortly related in the Latin *Ilias Latina* 689–694; see also note 38.

consisting of the Greek preposition ἀμφί and the root of the verb κόπτω, does not correspond to the usual Greek term, but has clearly been modelled directly after the traditional Latin translation. At the same time, the biblical character of Abraham is split into two personages, well fitting for a legacy, which as a rule does not consist of one person only. As far as Pulipater is concerned, this is a Greek translation of the Latin etymology of Abraham, *pater videns multitudinem*, offered in Jerome's *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum* three times (e.g. 76,2 Lagarde). Whereas Abraham is split in two personages, the *Eupolemius* unites the Old-Testament Judges, in Greek κριταί, in the character of one military leader called Crito—the author seems to be familiar with the homonymous Platonic dialogue through the writings of Cicero[29] and also knew the meaning of that proper name. In a similar way he deals with the prophets of the Old Testament, summarizing them in the character of general Oron, in Greek ὁρῶν meaning "the one who sees". All the personages mentioned up to now who not for the least through their Greek names came to be epic heroes, had their prototypes in the Old Testament and belong to the party of God, the Agatidae.

The followers of Cacus, the Apolides, are a different matter. Their patronymic denomination is derived from the Greek verb for "to destroy", ἀπόλλυμι.[30] They are mainly personifications, male personifications, to be exact, of vices, not based on the Old Testament. The examples of Aplestes, "the insatiable one", who stands for the vice of avarice, (H)Iper(e)fanes, "the arrogant one", in one instance (1,88) called also Superifanes, a hybrid mixture of Latin and Greek like Sarcodomas "the tamer of flesh", the counterpart of Aplestes, and Amartigenes "the producer of sins" should suffice, the latter being modelled after the title of Prudentius' didactic poem *Hamartigenia*. Heroes as well as anti-heroes perform their deeds in a sphere separate from the narrative level of the Old Testament, in a limited period of time and in a limited area. Doing so, the author surpasses in his poetic invention the writers of biblical epics by far in favour of a realistic epic scenario similar to classical epic poetry.

[29] Cic., *divin.* 1,52; 123; *Tusc. disp.* 1,103.

[30] The name Apolides may serve as an other example of Eupolemius' forming of Greek names almost arbitrarily: the basic word, according to the rules of Greek morphology, should be the adjective ἄπολις, 'homeless', which by the way could also befit the evil one and his followers, being expelled from heaven, their original home.

Nevertheless, how does the author manage to press the complete history of salvation into the limits of his epic? First he makes use of traditional epic means of style as the messenger's report and the description of material objects. Through the reports previous events are referred to in the time level of the actual happenings, just as in the narratives of Aeneas at Dido's court (*Aen.* 2–3), which for their part go back to the *apologoi* in the Odyssey. It is striking that those previous events, in spite of the changed names, carefully follow the narrative of the Old Testament, that is to say they represent elements of paraphrastic biblical epic poetry. The extensive speech of Moses, Agatus' messenger to Iuda who dwells in Babylon, at 1.70–645 (as far as literary typology is concerned modelled after the books Numeri and Deuteronomium of the Pentateuch) may serve as example.[31] Moses, by the way, is the only character of the actual plot to keep his true biblical name. There may be two reasons for that: first of all, this name, contrary to e.g. Abraham, does sound Greek because of its ending;[32] and secondly and even more important, he, the author of the Pentateuch himself, in his report offers an allegorical and (in the poet's opinion) authentic interpretation of his own writings to Iuda, the male personification of the 'good' Jews. So the Moses of the *Eupolemius* delivers the key to the correct interpretation of the Old Testament, an interpretation which, however, Iuda, although emotionally concerned, finally refuses to accept (2.561–567). This reflects the early Christian, patristic and medieval blaming of the Jews for not understanding their own Holy Scriptures.[33] The fact that the epic Moses of the *Eupolemius* is a personification of pre-Christian 'good' Judaism rather than a realistic picture of the biblical leader of the Israelites, is particularly expressed in the obituary to Moses, killed by Antifrononciades, a follower of Cacus (2.76–79).

The second epic means of presentation through which the complete Old Testament is embedded into the time level of the actual happenings is, as mentioned before, the description (ἔκφρασις) of shields and precious goblets. All this can be traced back as far as the *Iliad*, namely to the description of the shield of Achilles (18.478–608) and the

[31] Another instance is given in the speech of Politeon, representative of pagan polytheism, at 2,468–555.

[32] Only because of being restricted to Virgilian vocabulary Proba in her Cento calls Moses *Musaeus* (36, quoting *Aen.* 6,667).

[33] 2 Cor. 3,6; 13–15 (allegorizing the veil Moses put on his face when descending from Mount Sinai: Ex. 34,33).

goblet of Nestor respectively (11.632–637). The tradition of epic description of a shield was given a new dimension through Virgil's ἔκφρασις of the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.608–731), as the timeless ideal world of Achilles' shield was replaced by an interpretation of Roman history.[34] For Aeneas, Roman history is the future; in a reversal process of what Virgil was doing, the author of the *Eupolemius* in his shield-descriptions shows previous periods, namely the Old Testament in its literal, historical sense. Thus on the shield of Moses the Creation of the Universe und the deluge are represented, that is to say a concentrated report of important events of the first Book of the Pentateuch, combined with the corresponding pagan myth of the Deucalionian flood (2.65–75). The same technique is applied in the description of the shield of Sother (the Greek translation of Josuah), on which the battles between Israelites and Canaanites, the fall of Jericho and the standstill of the sun can bee seen. The latter scene is contrasted with the pagan myth of the 'long night' in which Jove procreated Hercules (2.82–89), as in the *Ecloga Theoduli* 165–172. On the shield of Crito Samson, a central figure in the book of Judges, is paralleled with Hercules, by the author considered as a mythological depravation of the biblical personage analogous to the *Ecloga Theoduli* 176 (2.269–281). In connection with this shield we also find an epic 'passing on', διαδοχή, that can be compared with the διαδοχή of the helmet of Odysseus in the *Iliad* (10.260–271) and with the passing on of precious objects on the occasion of Aeneas' visit to Euander (*Aen.* 8,166–168). In a similar way the two goblets are described, which one of the supporters of the Messiah, Agapes, a male personification of Christian charity,[35] possesses (2.616–625). One of them shows the scale of Jacob connecting earth and heaven (Gen 28:12), a scene which the author quite artificially parallels with the transformation of the comrades of Diomedes into birds, as reported in the *Aeneid* (11.271–274), in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (14.456–511) and even in Augustine (*civ.* 18.16, 18). To these just mentioned means of epic presentation others may be added. Above all the decisive individual fight, μονομαχία, as the fight between Achilles and Hector in the *Iliad* (22.306–394): the final battle between Cacus and the Messiah (2.696–732) in the

[34] See Ch. Ratkowitsch, 'Eine historische Lücke in der Vergilischen Schildbeschreibung (*Aen.* 8,626–728)', *WS* 114 (2001) 233–249 (with bibliography).

[35] It is worth noticing that the same form, Agapes, going back to the Greek genitive of a feminine noun, in Hrotsvit's of Gandersheim hagiographic drama Dulcitius is used as the name of a young girl.

Eupolemius clearly corresponds to the one between Turnus and Aeneas at the end of Virgil's epic (*Aen.* 12.887–952). In this context, also the threnody must not be forgotten: in the *Iliad* Thetis mourns for her son Achilles although he is still alive (18.52–64), and in Statius' *Thebaid* threnodies of women mourning for dead warriors conclude the narration (12.797–807). In the *Eupolemius* it is Mary who mourns the Messiah, just like in medieval literary lamentations of the *mater dolorosa*. It seems probable, that here the poet does not only refer to classical epic, but also to a genre of contemporary religious lyric.[36]

Using all these means of presentation the author of the *Eupolemius* is technically capable of writing a free and genuine epic of Christian contents and classical style. The allegorical interpretation of both the Old Testament and the pagan myths offered the theoretical basis—a decisive step beyond the paraphrastic biblical epics and the allegorical epic of Prudentius, whose *Psychomachia* he uses abundantly.[37] But Prudentius inverted the sequence of the dichotomy of the *Aeneid*, the first half of which tells of the events previous to the war in Italy, the battles being reserved for the second half, whereas the poet of the *Eupolemius* restores Virgil's sequence, concentrating the fights on three days in the second book. On the first day, the army of the Agatidae is lead by generals who go back to the Pentateuch and the Book of Judges, that is to say to the beginning of the Old Testament, Moses, Sother, and Crito, all defeated by the army of Cacus. On the second day, marked by an epic evening-scene (2.315–318), Agatus orders Oron, the representative of the Prophets, to take over command. On the third day, also marked by an evening-scene (2.569), when Oron was already killed in the battle (2.448–452), Messiah, king Agatus' son, is appointed commander-in-chief. It is striking that among the Old-Testament books that deal with history, one important group is almost completely missing: namely the Books of the Kings. David and Salomon are assigned only marginal roles. David, called with his artificial patronymic name Iesseius, is just a soldier bravely defeating the giant Getheus (= Goliath)[38] and later on

[36] See P. Dronke, 'Laments of the Maries. From the beginnings to the Mystery Plays', in: G.W. Weber (ed.), *Ideen, Gestalt, Geschichte–Festschrift für Klaus von See*, Odense 1988, 89–116 = P. Dronke, *Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe*, Rome 1992 (Studi e Testi 182), 457–489 (esp. 482–483).

[37] Manitius (n. 17) 20 is not right writing that the poet of the Eupolemius refers to Prudentius "in geringerem Maß"; see Ratkowitsch (n. 17) 241–243.

[38] As he did before in a couple of instances, the poet interprets a pagan myth as depravation of the biblical narrative even in connection with David, when he asserts

object of one of the descriptions,[39] whereas Salomon, translated into Greek as Irineus (a name not fitting an impetuous warrior), is only mentioned when killed by Fuscus, a follower of Cacus (2.420). This circumstance, however, which is not rooted in the *ratio operis*, might be a hint at the historical background of the poem and, in consequence, at the time of its composition. Indeed in the final lines the readers are encouraged "to break the hard bone in order to find the tasty marrow" (2.774–777), that is to say the profound message of the poem which thereby is assigned the function of a veil, a *tegumentum*, of a hidden truth. After the conquest of Jerusalem on July 15th, 1099 the leader of the first crusade, Geoffrey of Bouillon, refused to be crowned king, for in Jerusalem no one but God himself should be king. Geoffrey died already on July 18th, 1100. His brother, Balduin, who succeeded him, was crowned king, not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. Nonetheless from that time onwards there was a king in the Holy Land and his residential city was Jerusalem. Thus the epic, in which the mention of human kings of Jerusalem–Agatus and the Messiah act on a different level of existence[40]—is practically avoided, seems to originate from the comparatively short period between the summers of 1099 and 1100. The exclusive reference of the *Eupolemius* to a limited group of cru-

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that the king's ability to play the *cithara* in order to mitigate Saul's melancholy (1 Reg. 16,23) has been assigned to Achilles (2,409); but although Achilles is well attested in Latin literature as a musician (*laus Pisonis* 169–173; *Ilias Latina* 585–586; Stat., *Achill.* 1,187–188; 572; silv. 4,4,35; Hygin., fab. 106), he is always said to play music in order to console himself over the loss of Briseis. In none of the instances, however, is he reported to sing a song celebrating the deeds of the heroes of the past, as we are told at Iliad 9,186–191. Facing this evidence, it is more than striking that the poet of the Eupolemius quotes Il. 9,189 verbally in 2,411–412, transferring the contents of Achilles' heroic songs κλέα ἀνδρῶν without any point of reference in the Bible, to David's praise of the *facta virorum / inclita*. A closer investigation of Eupolemius' source for this detail could probably yield an explanation for this.

[39] Ratkowitsch (n. 17) 254, arguing against this observation of mine, points out that the Books of the Kings are quite well represented in the poem, quoting the only scene, in which David appears on the battlefield (2,395–413)—but as a fighter under the commando of Oron (!). In a second instance David's military success is mentioned in the description of a precious goblet (2,624–625), that is to say quite remote from the primary narrative.

[40] Attention should be paid to 1,74, where the duration of Agatus' kingship up to the present is explicitly underlined: *colit ut coluit rex Agatus illam* (sc. Jerusalem); the acting representative of Agatus' in the earthly Jerusalem in history was nobody else but his son Messiah, who only towards the end of the epic, that is to say after his victory, is called king (2,717; 721; 765; 770).

saders, the so-called peasants' crusade of Peter the Hermit,[41] does not do justice to the tendency of the poem as a whole, although this episode may well have been integrated in the narrative. The motto of the epic on the 'good war' is clearly that of the entire first crusade, quoted verbally at 2.660, by the way in close neighbourhood to the mention of the king of Jerusalem, Agatus: *sic voluit deus*—in perfect tense (!)—alludes clearly to *Deus lo volt*, a quotation hardly fitting a military expedition not yet successfully brought to an end.[42]

To sum up: in general, the *Eupolemius* gives the impression of a skilful and learned application of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (which itself has a definite historical trajectory)[43] to contemporary history according to the Jewish concept of history as the manifestation of God's continuous intervention in the affairs of his beloved people. According to the author's conviction, this application of biblical narratives to present events corresponds to the quality of the entire biblical text as a typological *forma futuri*. Such an application represents the authentic exegesis (or one among other authentic ones) of the Bible, above all the Old Testament, whereas pagan mythology is considered to be the result of false exegesis of the same Bible, leading to polytheism. This attitude differs

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[41] Which failed in Asia Minor in 1096, as suggested by Ratkowitsch (n. 17), who believes the poem to be a propaganda-text—by the way little efficient if addressed to illiterate future crusaders; see also the following note.

[42] Ratkowitsch (n. 17) 255–262 tries to establish a series of arguments in support of her hypothesis that the whole of *Eupolemius* was written as a literary propaganda for the peasants' crusade of Peter the Hermit. Although it is true that the followers of Agatus in a number of passages are characterized as *rustici* (2,10–13; 107–121; 180–190; 207–210; 667–674), they nevertheless are indirectly addressed as knights, in spite of their uncouth appearance (2,330–331). However, it does not seem impossible that the movement of Peter the Hermit constitutes one element among others in the composition of the *Eupolemius*, even if the poem was written after the autumn of 1096. By then, the major part of the peasant army was defeated in Asia Minor. Peter himself joined the troops of the knights and eventually arrived in Palestine. The additional arguments by Ratkowitsch (n. 17) 258–261 are too contrived to be convincing: e.g. why should the anachronistic adverb *nunc* in Bede's text be due to his source Eucherius, whereas in *Eupolemius* 2,772, where the author verbally quotes Bede, it should be regarded as a hint to contemporary circumstances? In addition one should bear in mind that blaming the (Christian) enemies for poverty and humble outfit is a motif already to be found in the speech of *Superbia*, the representative of the pagan Roman nobility of the late fourth century, in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (206–252).—Ratkowitsch herself (n. 17) 256 n. 93 quotes *Psych*. 22–23, where *Fides* is described as *agresti turbida cultu*! However, she is right in rejecting the hypothesis of P. Ch. Jacobsen (review of the edition of K. Manitius, *MJb* 18 [1978] 304–307), in whose opinion the poem reflects the fights between the emperor Henry IV and Rudolf von Rheinfelden in 1080.

[43] See Smolak (n. 4), pass..

in one characteristic respect from the theories of Bernardus Silvestris quoted before, who distinguished between *allegoria* and *integumentum*, the former being adequate to the Bible, the latter to philosophy. Bernardus illustrates this distinction, probably under the influence of Boethius (*cons.* 3, *carm.* 12), with the example of Orpheus. In the later 12th century even the *integumentum*, that is, in Bernardus' terminology, pagan mythology, was conceded to contain a (philosophical) truth, whereas the poet of the *Eupolemius*, some decades prior to the French Platonist, denied truth to ancient mythology, thus faithfully adhering to the previous concept so clearly exposed in the *Ecloga Theoduli*.

THE POETICS OF BIBLICAL TRAGEDY IN ABELARD'S *PLANCTUS*

W. Otten

I. *The Place of the Middle Ages in the History of Exegesis*

History of exegesis appears to be a difficult, if not at times self-contradictory field. It presupposes that one is able to combine the careful study of philological meaning or theological content of selected biblical texts with the skilled and diligent scrutiny of the literary or rhetorical form in which these biblical texts were transmitted to us over time, not merely as physical texts but especially as meaningful vehicles of the Christian tradition. Out of the restless sea of interpretive strategies yielded throughout the course of history, the historian of exegesis may distill that the biblical text possesses a stable, if not fixed message, whose importance is even heightened when introduced as a 'revealed' one. It is with the detection of that revealed message that exegetical problems truly begin, not just in delineating what it is but, prior to that, whether it can be determined at all.

In response to the above problems contemporary professional exegetes habitually observe a distinction between revelatory content and historical exegetical form, yet the fact that this is a modern practice suggests to us that such distinctions were not always applied. My point of departure for this article is that, contrary to what might be expected, the tension between historical form and eternal meaning was equally operative in medieval exegesis. This is an important statement because the fault lines between text and interpretation seem far less visible in the medieval than in the modern period, given the assumed dominance of 'uncritical' exegetical practices like allegory in the former. With the medieval period in many ways regarded as the Christian era par excellence, moreover, the Christian—since the nineteenth century one should rather say: Roman Catholic—character of medieval thought has seemed all but self-evident.[1] Yet precisely the self-evidence with which

[1] See R. van Kesteren, *Het verlangen naar de middeleeuwen: de verbeelding van een historische passie*, Amsterdam 2004. See also N.F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages. The Lives, Works*

we take the Christian nature of medieval exegetical texts for granted proves to be a difficult obstacle when we try to gauge their precise message. All too often the idea is that medieval exegetical texts were primarily meant to express and bolster the theological tenets held by the Church, promoting them as a great good for the benefit of all. What it is that Scripture represents to the medieval church, however, is a question that in the meantime is left wide open, as we apparently operate on the assumption that its foundational relevance requires scarce comment.

While modern exegetical practice can give us good insights into the history of biblical reception,[2] it also helps us to actualize the theological content of biblical exegesis against the background of our current historical and theological standards.[3] By approaching Scripture from an 'enlightened' and as such distinctly modern methodological mindset, contemporary exegesis tries to bridge the distance between form and content of the biblical text. Still, we should not overlook how in other respects modern exegetical practice stands at risk of actually widening the gap with Scripture. With historical-critical exegesis representing a rather formal, if not entirely formalistic approach, even if still finding its natural home mostly in seminaries and theology departments, professional exegetes may find it increasingly difficult to make room for the so-called third variable in biblical exegesis, i.e., the corpus of past exegetical readings. Concentrating primarily on how to bridge one historical gap, namely that between the textual author's historical intent (*e mente auctoris*) and a relevant theological 'message' for our current age, they create at the same time another. If we take the standards of critical exegesis as normative, the history of biblical interpretation can easily become divided into a modern phase, with the biblical text seen primarily as a human product, and a premodern one, in which by contrast the Bible is seen as the voice of direct divine command.

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and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century, New York 1991, esp. 287–296. About medievalism in general, see R.H. Bloch and S.G Nichols (eds), *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, Baltimore 1996.

[2] See H.Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: a History of Early Christian Texts*, New Haven 1995. See further the recent outpouring of books by Bart Ehrmann, such as *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: the Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, New York 1993; *The New Testament. A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, New York ^{2}2000; *Lost Christianities: the Battle for Scriptures and the Faiths We Never Knew*, New York 2003.

[3] I refer esp. to the tradition of 'Entmythologisierung' as represented by R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen ^{7}1977.

These modern tensions, especially between the role of historical-critical exegesis and premodern trajectories of biblical meaning and, to a lesser extent, the question how best to describe the theological function of exegesis, are directly reflected in the way in which the field of medieval studies has evaluated the place of medieval exegesis in the past half century. The medieval contribution to the field of history of exegesis has manifested itself first of all in the fact that in the last fifty years the history of exegesis of this period was studied not only more intensely than before but also with greater impact on the wider field of medieval studies. Second, medieval exegesis has been increasingly appreciated and studied for making us attentive to new theological voices in the period. This is reflected in the various connections that have become demonstrated between medieval exegesis, especially in the monastic sphere, and the burgeoning realm of medieval spirituality.[4]

As a subspecialty of medieval studies, medieval exegesis has been approached in various ways. Not surprisingly, a first generation critical scholar like Beryl Smalley was interested primarily in the ways in which medieval exegesis foreshadowed modern critical exegesis in displaying a strong historical and philological bend.[5] She focused especially on the rise of the literal interpretation of Scripture, betraying a decided interest in the School of St. Victor and their new interest in the literal sense. The classical handbook for medieval exegesis by Henri de Lubac elaborates instead the author's predilection for and expert knowledge of the fourfold sense of scripture.[6] While De Lubac seems to favor at times perhaps an 'uncritical' exegetical stance, his position is better understood when we see it before all as inspired by his understanding of the challenges of contemporary theology. Searching for an alternative voice to the drone of Neo-Scholasticism, he wanted the Catholic tradition to draw on Scripture in order to make its own prophetic rather than dogmatic contribution to modern culture. Far from denigrating history of exegesis as the handmaiden of systematic theology, he wished to undertake a 'ressourcement' of Catholic theology. In doing so, he

[4] This is especially reflected in the attention for the exegesis of the Song of Songs, see e.g. E.A. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved. The Song of Songs in western medieval Christianity*, Philadelphia, 1990; D. Turner, *Eros and Allegory. Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs*, Kalamazoo 1995.

[5] B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Notre Dame 1964 (1940).

[6] De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, Paris 1959–1964, 2 vols., now translated into English by M. Sebanc (vol. 1) and E.M. Macierowski (vol. 2) as *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, Grand Rapids 1998–2000.

saw the relation between the biblical and the patristic periods as uncannily close, taking his exegetical cue especially from the latter era.

Following on the heels of De Lubac and others, such as Jean Daniélou, the study of patristic exegesis has in recent years attracted more systematic attention than medieval exegesis,[7] to which the ecumenical interest of reformed and Anglican scholars of early Christianity may have contributed, while the project of a 'ressourcement' of Catholic theology seems to have collapsed somewhat under the weight of a post-Vatican II doctrinal restoration. Thus medieval exegesis stands at risk of once again being cast aside as irrelevant for our postmodern and post-confessional sensibilities.

II. *Abelard, the Middle Ages, and the Bible*

As I argued above, one of the difficulties in mapping out medieval exegesis is that medieval theology and medieval exegesis are often seen as overlapping, if not synonymous terms. This is especially true of the early-medieval, i.e., pre-scholastic era. Here is De Lubac's summary:

> As a result, theological science and the explication of Scripture cannot but be one and the same thing. In its most profound and far-reaching sense this estimation of the situation remains true even to our own day. But in its stricter and more immediate sense, this idea flourished right to the eve of the thirteenth century.[8]

Whatever its general relevance, the tendency behind a statement like De Lubac's is to consider theology the consequence of exegetical decision making.[9] The fact that at times it may precisely be the other way around, i.e., that one's exegesis is the logical outcome of one's particular intellectual / theological position,[10] is considered far less seriously.

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[7] See Ch. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, Leiden 2004, 2 vols.

[8] See De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1. The Four Senses of Scripture, 27.

[9] This seems to be the position of G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible. The Earlier Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1984. Her aim is to see early-medieval theology as arising organically from the early-medieval focus on exegesis, demonstrated especially by its focus on language. In pursuing her aim she makes more room for theology proper than De Lubac.

[10] An example is the remarkable interpretation of Gen. 3:22b by Eriugena in *Periphyseon* V 859D–865C. He there interprets God's command that Adam *not eat* from the Tree of Life as a divine promise that he *may* one day *eat* from it. See on this W. Otten, 'The Dialectic of the Return in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*', *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991) 399–421; see also W. Otten, 'The Return to Paradise. Role and Function of Early

Whether or not this view is the result of the humanist tradition of critical exegesis is less important than the fact that it should not make us lose sight of the complexity of medieval exegesis. In this essay I focus on what I consider to be one of the more creative and structural features of medieval exegesis, namely the desire to actualize the human reality underlying the biblical text. Erich Auerbach has explained how the close and almost personal affinity with which biblical figures in the Middle Ages are brought to life triggers a new kind of creative literature, known for its dramatic and rather 'secular' appeal.[11] Whether or not this means that this kind of literature no longer qualifies as 'exegetical' is among the questions that this article will explore. It may well do so according to modern but not medieval standards.

Let us now turn to the case of Peter Abelard, who is the subject of my exegetical reflections. On the whole the problem with twelfth-century thought, which his works typically exemplify, is that it shows us an era in which the rise of scholasticism appears to have severely diminished the role of the Bible. Be that as it may, Richard Southern has recently questioned this assumption in his volumes on *Scholastic Humanism*, trying to paint a different picture of biblical influence in the medieval schools:

> The fundamental teaching method of the medieval schools, which they handed on to the universities that grew out of them, was the exposition of authoritative texts. And of all the texts expounded in the schools there was none that could claim anything like the degree of authority and range of influence possessed by the Bible. It is necessary to begin by saying this, because one of the most widely held and longest lasting misconceptions about scholastic thought, which has lasted from the 16th century—and even earlier—almost to the present day, has been that it diminished the role of the Bible in the totality of Christian thought. Indeed the diminishment would seem to be obvious.[12]

Focusing on Abelard and taking Southern's corrections into account I see a number of dilemmas that require solving before we can fit him properly into our discussion on medieval exegesis. The most impor-

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Medieval Allegories of Nature', in: A. Vanderjagt and K. van Berkel (eds), *The Book of Nature in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Leuven 2005, 97–121, esp. 105–112.

[11] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W.E. Trask, Princeton 1953, 143–173 (Adam and Eve). See his comment on p. 151: 'The dialogue between Adam and Eve—the first man-woman dialogue of universal historical import—is turned into a scène of simplest everyday reality.'

[12] See R.W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vol. I: Foundations, Oxford 1995, 102.

tant one is whether to regard Abelard as a proper scholastic thinker. Although there are good reasons to support this view, it is on the other hand striking how many aspects of his thought display Platonic, biblical, poetic, monastic and ethical motifs, which make him rather stand apart from this tradition.[13] This makes it difficult to subscribe to any one-dimensional characterization of Abelard, let alone a scholastic one. Moreover, if we follow L.M. de Rijk and others in relating an author's scholastic profile primarily to his choice of method,[14] Abelard's preference not to have any fixed method but rather to tap into a variety of them is indeed striking. In this regard it is important not to misunderstand his strong commitment to *Sic et Non* as a commitment *tout court* to the question-and-answer format inherent in scholastic procedure. In his case, it rather signals a wider preference for methodical doubt questioning even the validity of scholastic reasoning itself.

Having thus qualified the scholastic nature of Abelard's thought, we should not pass over the larger definitional problems arising from Southern's statement. Taking a closer look, one can hardly fail to notice certain theological presuppositions. As these color his chapter on the role of the Bible more generally, it is useful to comment on them here. Thus Southern sees as notable characteristics of biblical influence first the matter of its inerrancy and second its universality. Leaving the matter of the Bible's universality aside, as I think this position can be argued in the aftermath of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*—if not, strictly speaking in the same way Augustine puts it there,[15] then certainly in the way in which it was received—, the Bible's inerrancy seems a different problem altogether. For what does it mean? In the eyes of its early-medieval interpreters, the Bible clearly does not make any mistakes but does that help to elucidate the nature of its truth?

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[13] See M.T. Clanchy, *Abelard. A Medieval Life*, Oxford 1997, for a rich portrait of Abelard as a many-faceted and indeed, many-faced thinker. See also the two chapters on Abelard in W. Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm. A Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism*, Leiden 2004, 129–214.

[14] See L.M. de Rijk, *La philosophie au Moyen Âge*, Leiden 1985 [trans. of *Middeleeuwse wijsbegeerte. Traditie en vernieuwing*, Assen 1977], esp. ch. 4. For De Rijk's 'scholastic' characterization of Abelard, see 'Peter Abälard (1079–1142): Meister und Opfer des Scharfsinns', in: R. Thomas a.o. (eds), *Petrus Abelardus (1079–1142). Person, Werk und Wirkung*, Trier 1980, 125–138.

[15] On the point of Augustinian influence on western reading practices, see B. Stock, *After Augustine. The Meditative Reader and the Text*, Philadelphia 2001. Stock holds Augustine's turn to the study of the Bible, laid out in the intellectual program of *On Christian Doctrine*, responsible for the cultural switch from spoken to written language, and hence to an emphasis on reading.

As much as Southern celebrates the Bible's inerrancy, I wonder if we cannot celebrate its profound sense of mystery in much the same way. In my view it is particularly in the space where *mystery* begins to solidify into *inerrancy* that early-medieval exegetes seem to locate their own positions. Without ever contradicting the Bible's literal truth, they display a great deal of creativity and exercise remarkable intellectual freedom in trying to find their own exegetical voice. Contrary to Southern's statement on inerrancy, it is my impression that the gap between *inerrancy* and *mystery* may well have been at its widest in the twelfth century, as the authors of that period seem to be able to take very different positions inspired by the same texts. In a related development, as Auerbach demonstrates, the dramatic effect that could be achieved by playing to one's audience precisely through exegetical means was at its zenith during this time.[16] Perhaps because the scholastic form was still malleable, as indicated by my comments on Abelard's *Sic en Non*, and had not yet hardened into fixed form requiring specialized readership, the potential audience for twelfth century (biblical) rhetoric was without bounds, as it defied narrow categorization and extended in effect to both schools and monasteries.

As a concrete example of contrary exegetical positions based on the same biblical text and presented with equal dramatic temerity, we can point out how both Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux have used the image of David battling Goliath.[17] But to how greatly different effect! In the third book of his *Theologia Christiana* Abelard typecasts his (scholastic) opponents as coming after him with their swords, as a result of which he, just as David battling Goliath before him, can only defeat them with their own weapons.[18] This biblical analogy corresponds with the polemical strategy that Abelard employs elsewhere in his work to defend the use of reason in the exposition of faith. His usual argument is that he is forced to turn to reason for help because his opponents do so as well and he simply needs to react. Fittingly, the sword of

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[16] See Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 143–173 (Adam and Eve) on the strategic use of the sublime and the low style. See further his essays in *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. R. Manheim, Princeton, 1993 (1965).

[17] See on this my article 'Authority and Identity in the Transition from Monastic to Scholastic Theology: Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux', in: J. Frishman, W. Otten and G. Rouwhorst (eds), *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation. The Foundational Character of Authoritative Sources in the History of Christianity and Judaism*, Leiden 2004, 349–368, esp. 367–368.

[18] See Abelard, *Theologia Christiana* III.53, ed. E.M. Buytaert, Turnhout 1969, CCCM 12: 53.682–689.

hostile reason thus becomes Abelard's greatest prop; it bolsters his intellectual pride by allowing him to identify with David in turning the tables on the Goliaths of his age. In a different way, we find Bernard of Clairvaux in Letter 189 ridiculing Arnold of Brescia by portraying him as a rattling Goliath who almost succumbs under the weight of his own armor.[19] Here the identification is one based on distance rather than affinity, namely between Bernard and his Goliath-like opponents, among whom he reckons Abelard as well. Arnold's insanity becomes all the more visible, so Bernard goes on, because there is no David anywhere in sight. Bernard's distance to Goliath climaxes dramatically in the felt absence of David. Faced without an opponent in battle, Arnold cries out for combat to Bernard, who presents himself more or less as forced to step out of the shadow. It is as if biblical David solemnly makes way for Bernard as his twelfth-century understudy, allowing the latter to control his opponent as he himself once did in biblical battle. Only this time control is not exercised through weapons but through the dramatic use of rhetorical means.[20]

III. *Abelard's* Planctus*: Three Exegetical Visions*

The use of the David-Goliath analogy by both Abelard and Bernard suffices to demonstrate that the point of biblical inerrancy remains a difficult claim which despite Southern's remarks cannot easily be corroborated. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied, making it a claim that is not necessarily right or wrong but simply fails to address the particular dynamic involved in medieval exegesis. Meanwhile, the resonance of such biblical role-playing was enormous and could be used to rather different theological effect. Both Bernard and Abelard contextualized themselves as lead-actors in a drama of biblical proportions, even though they played out their heroic status in contrasting ways.

While the rhetorical identification with biblical figures may astound if not confuse our modern theological sensibilities because of its fresh irreverence,[21] the complications that can arise out of such biblical role

[19] See Bernard of Clairvaux, Epistola 189.3, in: J. Leclercq, H. Rochais (eds), *S. Bernardi Opera Vol. VIII. Epistolae*, Rome 1977, 14. For a translation see letter 239 in *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. B.S. James, Gloucestershire 1998, 317–320.

[20] Remarkably, Bernard's letter uses the same comparison between rhetoric and battle for which Abelard has become famous.

[21] A case in point is Abelard's identification with Christ in his correspondence with

playing are even more striking in the case of poetic exegesis. As a case in point I will now turn to Abelard's *planctus*. Whereas my advice above was not to take the biblical inerrancy of the scholastic era overly seriously, as it does not rule out creative exegetical interpretation, in the discussion that follows I want to demonstrate that we should also not exaggerate Abelard's poetic license in dealing with Scripture, as he may be less concerned with the details of his personal life than is often expected.

What then is the point that he is trying to make in these laments? As it is impossible to discuss them all individually, I see as my main task in the remainder of this essay to find out whether their complete cycle reflects the precise elaboration of one overall exegetical program or forms an incidental collage of lyrical elegies. Whatever the final outcome of my reflection on these plaints, it is clear that despite and underneath their dramatic appeal, Abelard displays a great deal of emotional distance in them as the joint result of rhetorical skill alongside a controlled dosage of exegetical information. Rather than reading them as subjective outcries of an emotional nature, therefore, we may want to study how Abelard carefully balances his exegetical and his dramatic interests, as it is in their poetic combination that his contribution lies.

Over the years numerous theories about Abelard's *Planctus* have been contemplated. Here I want to name and comment on three different readings as background to my final position.

1. In 1951 Giuseppe Vecchi published an edition of Abelard's six poetic laments, in which he emphasized especially the autobiographical character of this corpus.[22] The respective themes of these six laments are: (1) Dina's lament over the death of her former lover Sichem, (2) Jacob's lament over his sons Joseph and Benjamin whom he thinks dead, (3) the lament of Jephta's daughter over her impending death, (4) the lament of Samson over his impending death and finally, two laments in which the figure of David is prominent, i.e. (5) David's lament over the death of Abner and (6) David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.

Heloise for which even contemporary scholarship criticizes him. See my analysis in 'The Bible and the Self in Medieval Autobiography: Otloh of St. Emmeram (1010–1070) and Peter Abelard (1079–1142)', in: D.E. Aune and J. McCarthy (eds), *The Whole and Divided Self. The Bible and Theological Anthropology*, New York 1997, 130–157, esp. 138–146. See also D. Frank, 'Abelard as Imitator of Christ', *Viator* 1 (1970) 107–113.

[22] See G. Vecchi (ed), *Pietro Abelardo. I "Planctus"*, Modena 1951.

According to Vecchi's interpretation, the Bible is "the eternal fount where the Middle Ages draw their wisdom, where it finds its models to follow, human figures of fall and redemption, visions of the future".[23] Given the generic nature of that observation, in which the Bible can easily become a mere grab bag of sapiential platitudes, it is not surprising that Vecchi regards these laments as written entirely in an autobiographical vein. When Abelard found himself at the Paraclete, away from his beloved Heloise, these laments were his liturgical recreations and consolations for Heloise and her nuns, containing his memories of loss and despair about a love that once was his but was now lost forever.

In interpreting these poems Vecchi closely follows chronological order. The first poem containing Dina's lament about Sichem tells the story of Heloise who deplores he castration of Abelard and the intervention of her uncle Fulbert provoking it. The second poem containing Jacob's lament about his two sons reflects the sadness of another figure who has ample reason to weep about Abelard, his old father Berengar in Brittanny, whose grief about his son is best expressed in the biblical image of Jacob mourning the loss first of Joseph and later of Benjamin. The third lament which is expressed by Jephta's daughter with a responding chorus (the *Planctus virginum Israel*) represents in Vecchi's interpretation the double sacrifice of Heloise: her sacrifice of love followed by her sacrifice of the world. It is a very elaborate poem and as such represents poetic synthesis. In the story of Samson that follows Vecchi sees an analogy to the betrayal suffered by Abelard, the difference being that Delila does not symbolize the figure of Heloise but rather Abelard's betrayal by his own concupiscence. In conformity with their autobiographical character Vecchi sees a close correspondence between these poems and the personal letters of Abelard and Heloise, whereby we have the odd situation that he apparently takes the letters at their word, while he sees the poems as carefully crafted and hence somewhat artificial compositions. Given the turbulent history of the interpretation of the correspondence between Abelard and Heloise that still was to follow, as Vecchi wrote before the discussions initiated by John Benton and Peter von Moos, this comparison seems in hindsight rather antiquated.[24]

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[23] See Vecchi, *I "Planctus"*, 14.

[24] John F. Benton's famous articles on the supposed fraudulent nature of the correspondence followed by a reconsideration concerning Abelard's editorial role of the epistolary corpus are republished as his 'Abaelardiana' in T.N. Bisson (ed.), *John F. Ben-*

2. A second model for interpreting these letters is found in Peter Dronke's insightful study *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages*.[25] Rather than an interpretation of the entire corpus, Dronke's study zooms in on the laments by Jephta's daugther and Samson. What is new in Dronke's approach compared to Vecchi's is that he points away from the spontaneous and autobiographical and toward the more genre-like elements of *planctus*. Yet at the same time he has developed a keen eye for structural features of 'otherness' mixed into these formulaic laments, notably the aspects of parody and satire. In this respect it is significant how Dronke comes to highlight before all the polished and literary character of these poems, especially of the lament of Jephta's daughter.

For Dronke the death scene or sacrificial offering of Jephta's daughter bears the character of what he calls a 'black' wedding. The climax of this lament shows us Abelard toying with his biblical material and as such creating more drama than found in the—already dramatic but brief—biblical narrative itself. In Samson's lament, on the other hand, as the second poem discussed at length by Dronke, he points to the deeply human character which cuts through the overlay of stock biblical references, almost undermining these altogether. As Dronke's rich interpretation suggests, Samson's profiled humanity helps to bring home the Christological vision, as opposed to the Old Testament view devoid of such redemptive overtones, in which the church can be seen to bring about the perspective of Christ as 'the new Samson' through whose sacrificial death all of humanity was reconciled to God.[26] Being more than anything about the intensity of drama, highlighting human sadness (*dolor*) rather than revenge (*ultio*), Abelard's lament on Samson parodies according to Dronke in the end even the genre of parody itself. For it is precisely at Samson's climactic moment of self-destruction, i.e., his suicide, that Abelard appears both to parody *and* to mirror Christ's sacrifice all at the same time. Samson's suicide is a parody because his death is self-serving in its destructive character. It is a mirror because

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ton. Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France, London 1991, 409–512. For Von Moos' opinion, see 'Abelard, Heloise und Ihr Paraklet: Ein Kloster nach Mass. Zugleich eine Streitschrift gegen die ewige Wiederkehr hermeneutischer Naïvität', in: *Das Eigene und das Ganze. Zum Individuellen im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum*, eds G. Melville and M. Schürer, Münster 2002, 563–619.

[25] See P. Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages. New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150*, Oxford 1970, 114–149 (ch. 4: 'Peter Abelard: *Planctus* and Satire').

[26] On patristic evidence for the juxtaposition of Samson and Christ, see Dronke, *Poetic Individuality*, 128–132. Dronke mentions Jerome, Caesarius of Arles, Isidore of Seville and Gregory the Great as Abelard's predecessors in the use of this analogy.

his death is like Christ's self-willed and as such redemptive, to the extent that he destroys Israel's enemy even as, tragically, he also destroys himself.

3. In a recent article in the Festschrift for Peter Dronke Giovanni Orlandi leads us through a detailed analysis of Dronke's wide-ranging contribution to the study of Abelard's *planctus*.[27] Rather than studying Abelard's precise sources, which he may have deemed too far-fetched after Dronke's elaborate work on them, he chooses instead to look at contemporaneous specimens of poetic form, pointing out resemblances of the laments with he Romance *lai* or German *Leich*. More than in these *lai*, however, he sees the roots of Abelard's laments in earlier samples of *planctus*, as far as content is concerned, or in sequences like n. 100 of the *Carmina Burana*, namely Dido's lament. Abelard's *planctus* reflect the same kind of regular sequences and they are likewise largely monosyllabic in character. Orlandi points especially to two late eleventh-century sequences, namely *Laudes crucis attollamus* and *Congaudentes exsultemus*, before entering on a detailed discussion of the lament for Jephta's daughter.

In discussing the element of satire, underscored by Dronke when he pointed to Abelard's *reductio ad absurdum* of various misogynous elements in Samson's lament, Orlandi ultimately rejects this position as a credible Abelardian one. In his eyes Dronke's interpretation presupposes such intimate knowledge of the two lovers that no outside readers can be a party to this. As he concludes his analysis on p. 340:

> If there were parody and satire in this *planctus*, they could hardly have been appreciated by anybody. True, Heloise certainly understood, if those hidden intentions were really there; but these are secrets between them which nobody else, let alone readers of the 20th or 21th century, will be able to share.

While it may seem as if Orlandi is reverting back here to a Vecchi-like position, there is another element in Orlandi's article besides the autobiographical to which I want to call attention, as it can help us to elaborate the exegetical meaning of Abelard's *planctus* in a different direction. Building on Dronke's suggestion that the *planctus* about Samson engages readers in a sympathetic description of his suffering pre-

[27] See G. Orlandi, 'On the Text and Interpretation of Abelard's *Planctus*', in: J. Marenbon (ed.), *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages. A Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, Leiden 2001, 327–342.

cisely to co-opt them into an attitude of receptivity regarding the Christian message of hope and redemption, Orlandi embraces the proper preparation for and communication of this message as the whole point of Abelard's entire corpus of laments. He argues that this corpus can best be seen as a six panel-cycle through which Abelard has composed a historical image of the pre-Christian world in its typical fallen and gloomy atmosphere. As Orlandi speculates, Abelard may well have contemplated writing another cycle of New Testament poems, thus making the drama of fall and redemption come full circle.

IV. *Abelard's* Planctus *as Integumental Exercises*

Whatever the *Planctus* are, and I admit that I am not clear about their exact status in Abelard's entire *oeuvre*,[28] I am inclined to think that in the end Orlandi's view, while attractive on the surface, does not hold up. My reason for saying so, which is based on Abelard's sophisticated poetics of biblical tragedy, is threefold:

1. From Abelard's theological works it seems altogether clear that in the prophets of the Old Testament, as in the philosophers of ancient Greece, he recognizes forerunners rather than antitypes of Christianity. If anything, he could have opted to complement this cycle of Old Testament poems with a series of poems on philosophers like Diogenes the Cynic and Theobrotus,[29] or perhaps on martyrs or persecuted heroes, Christian and un-Christian alike, ranging from Socrates to Antony and Jerome, and on to Benedict.[30] While he may well have been capable of using the tension between Old and New Testament to dramatic effect as representing respectively an unfulfilled promise versus a ful-

[28] The text of the *planctus* is edited by W. Meyer, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur mittellateinischen Rythmik*, Hildesheim 1970 (1905), 340–374. For my earlier comments on the *planctus*, see W. Otten, 'In Conscience's Court: Abelard's Ethics as a Science of the Self', in: I.P. Bejczy and R.G. Newhauser (eds), *Virtue, Ethics in the Twelfth Century*, Leiden 2005, 53–74, esp. 65–71. I have glanced at but not taken full account for this article the recent interpretation of the laments by E. Sweeney, *Logic, Theology, and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard and Alan of Lille. Words in the Absence of Things*, New York 2006, 95–114 (The Laments: Rejecting / Rewriting Allegory). See further n. 37 below.

[29] On Abelard's mention of and identification with pagan philosophers, see P. Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages c. 200–1150*, Cambridge 1993, 264–265.

[30] See my analysis of Abelard's so-called automartyrological stance in 'The Bible and the Self in Medieval Autobiography', 140ff.

filled one, this tension does not thereby translate necessarily into a contrast between Old and New Testament biblical types. The very complexity of the portrayal of Samson which both reflects Christological typology and critiques it from the perspective of human tragedy speaks against such stereotypical imaging.[31]

2. It seems that Abelard would probably not write a poetic cycle about New Testament figures as long as doing so would require him to endorse a view of New Testament characters as reflecting the straightforward acceptance of salvation, while the Old Testament contains only figures deeply fraught with ambiguity. In fact, since in his *Ethics* Abelard portrays a New Testament figure such as Peter in an equally ambiguous way as his casting of Old Testament types in the laments,[32] there does not exist much of a rationale for discriminating between Old Testament and New Testament characters as such. What is more, such a surface interest in salvation does not only go against Abelard's view of the Bible as a complete text, with the story of fall and redemption as a theme running equally through both of its books, but it also plays down the creative, dramatic actualization of the biblical text to be achieved by the interpreter as an inherent feature of early-medieval exegesis.

A further comment may now be added. While the Middle Ages often put forth the view that the literal and / or historical reading of the text serves as the foundation for allegorical meaning, with the twelfth century School of St.Victor being especially enamored of this view, Abelard's position is a more unusual one. I have labeled his view elsewhere as 'integumental' exegesis.[33] An *integumentum* is generally taken to be a rhetorical device of wrapping or clothing, whereby a pagan concept contains a Christian term in veiled form. Yet Abelard goes so far as to state that even Jesus himself used integuments, namely when

[31] This tension between promise and fulfillment is a tension which for Abelard is both concentrated in and resolved by the life and death of Christ. As a result, the distinction between before and after Christ does not seem to hold, as all of humanity is redeemed by his death, even the Saracens. For Abelard's position on incarnation, see Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 176–181. Key phrase in Abelard is: 'He will be more righteous, that is, more loving of God, after Christ's passion than before, because a completed benefice kindles more love than one that is hoped for', *Commentary on Romans* II (3:26), ed. Buytaert, CCCM 11: 118).

[32] For Abelard's position on Peter, whose tears compensate for a lack of confession, see my 'In Conscience's Court' [above n. 28], 60–65, with reference to *Ethics / Scito te ipsum* I.67–74, ed. Ilgner, CCCM 190, 67–74.

[33] See my 'In Conscience's Court', above n. 28.

he spoke in parables to his disciples. Stretching the use of *integumentum* in this way, Abelard creates the odd situation that a particularly Christian text from the New Testament can be approached in the same way as a pagan one: betraying the same alienating features, needing similar hermeneutical strategies of unveiling. The upshot of Abelard's attribution of *integumenta* to Christ himself is that the need for careful and methodical *exegesis* as the opposite of random *eisegesis* is now made explicit; after all, he perceives a deliberate divine strategy on the part of the Lord himself to speak in such mysteries. Thus we hear Abelard say in book II of his *Theologia Christiana*:

> If it pleases a Christian to acquire more erudite expressions and sentences, can this not altogether be done openly without applying oneself to poetic figments and inane fabulations? Which are the sorts of locutions, the embellishment of words that are not found on the sacred page, especially as it is dished out with parabolic and allegorical mysteries and overflowing almost everywhere with mystical coverings? Which are the sophisticated locutions that the mother of tongues, the Hebrew, has not taught, especially when it is known that the people of Palestine were used to parables, so that the Lord Jesus himself was also obliged to speak in parables when preaching the Gospel?[34]

It is clear that Abelard feels that there is no need to resort to pagan poetic figments, since the Bible itself is full of mysteries. Just as Christ spoke in mysteries, in his view the Bible as the Word of God is full of mysteries as well. A biblical interpreter should feel free to interpret these creatively, as long as he stays within conventional Christian bounds.

Thus while there may still be a difference between the period of the fall and that of redemption for Abelard, this does not coincide with an opposition in Hugh of St. Victor's sense of a difference between historical time starting with creation (*opus creationis*) and eschatological time starting with Christ (the *opus restaurationis*). Rather, it is as if for Abelard there is an ideological opposition between the biblical period as a whole (starting at creation and running through the events of

[34] See Abelard, *Theologia christiana* II.126, ed. Buytaert, CCCM 12, p. 191: Si iuuat Christianum legere ad eruditionem locutionum uel sententiarum, numquid hoc plene efficere non potest nisi poeticis studendo figmentis et inanibus fabulis? Quae sunt genera locutionum, qui ornatus uerborum quae sacra Pagina non habeat, maxime parabolarum et allegoriarum aenigmatibus referta et ubique fere mysticis redundans inuolucris? Quae sunt urbanitates locutionum quae mater linguarum Hebraica non docuerit, praesertim cum Palestinae terrae etiam plebem parabolis esse assuetam non lateat, ut his quoque Dominum Iesum loqui eis oporteret cum Euangelium praedicaret?

the book of Revelation) and the historical block of time thereafter, culminating in his own age. It seems a constant source of frustration for Abelard—and in this sense I agree with Orlandi—that he is not living in 'redeemed time', as he thinks a Christian ought to be. The main role of the Bible and of biblical figures in coming to terms with this felt anxiety is that they can serve as an introspective mirror, as their iconic status as existential soulmates creates the space to retell their tragic stories with an eye towards personal consolation. In this way Abelard anticipates and appropriates Christian redemption alongside poetic individuality.

3. The paradoxical awareness of not being redeemed in what should be a redeemed age is what retroactively may help us to shed light on Abelard's chosen approach in the *planctus*. Rather than any personal woes this paradox is what frames the need for consolation, not as a private matter but as a quintessentially human affair. Via a biblical tour d'horizon all these laments refer in an oblique way to the present as a period fraught with ambiguity. The reason for this ambiguity is not because there is not yet the hope of Christ, as in Dronke's more linear exegetical representation of the supposed Christian experience of time, but rather because of the idea that, given that the entire Bible is deeply suffused with that hope, history should have unfolded very differently. The fact that it did not provides Abelard with a perfect backdrop to reflect on alternative scenario's, because these biblical miniatures are so well-known that their heroes are types rather than real life figures, just as in the earlier example of David and Goliath. As Abelard opens his *planctus* on Samson:

> Truly a great abyss
> are your judgments, God.[35]
> to be feared the more,
> the more they are mysteries,
> the more that, faced with them,
> All other strengths are weak![36]

[35] See also the use of this quotation (Ps. 35:7 Vg.) in his *Ethics / Scito te ipsum* I.44.4, ed. Ilgner, CCCM 190, p. 43. The gist of Abelard's arguments there is that God's ways are indeed mysterious, as he can reject even those who offer themselves to him and accept those who do not seem eager to be saved or worthy.

[36] For the full text of this *planctus*, see P. Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages. New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150*, Oxford 1970, 121–123. [Abelard, *Planctus* IV, ed. Dronke, in: *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages. New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150*, Oxford 1970, 121]:

Just as Samson's suicide could have been a willed act of redemption like Christ's, even though it was not and Jephta's daughter's sacrificial bed could have been her wedding bed, even though it was not, so Dina's rape could have been a true love-affair. Whether that makes it in hindsight a covert one, as Vecchi's autobiographical reading does, is in my opinion going one step too far by closing off the full register of exegetical soundings prematurely. To conjure up the imagination needed to see such biblical figures in an alternative light is what constitutes the power of Abelard's lyrical exegesis, as he is able to overlay the real massacre of the Sichemites that followed with the trampled glory of what might have been. This power is ultimately the power of exegetical freedom, of the poetic imagination or, in more fitting Abelardian terms, of *ingenium*, and the chiaroscuro of reading biblical texts against the fixed salvation-historical grain of tradition is what makes these laments in the end both so personally moving and so universally tragic.[37] It is in the poetic freedom with which he embraces the tragic fate of his biblical role models[38]—and not in the biblical subject-matter per se, so I would argue—that in the end Abelard seems to have found not just the reason for lament but especially the beginning of consolation.

Abissus vere multa
Iudicia deus tua:
Eo plus formidanda
Quo magis sunt occulta
Et quo plus est ad illa
Quaelibet vis infirma!

[37] This also seems to be the conclusion of Sweeney, *Logic, Theology, and Poetry*, 114.

[38] Compare for a similar embrace of 'fate' also his reference to the Lord's Prayer *Fiat voluntas tua* at the end of the *Historia Calamitatum*.

III

OVERVIEWS, COMPARISONS

BIBLICAL POETRY IN LATIN LITURGICAL TEXTS

A.A.R. Bastiaensen

Introduction

The Christian Church never did without poetry. At the very beginning the Apostle Paul prompted the new Christian communities to sing psalms, hymns and songs inspired by the Spirit.[1] There is some discussion as to the exact meaning of his words, whether he intended to speak of songs of praise and gratitude in general or was thinking of three specific kinds of such songs.[2] However, that he expected the faithful to express their feelings in chants or in poetical language is evident.

As to the material the faithful had at their disposition, this consisted first of all of songs from the Old Testament. These songs were a legacy of the Jewish tradition. The heritage included the Book of Psalms in the first place. Next there were hymns, in particular the Song of the three children in the fiery furnace, and, further, the other songs of the Old Testament (the Song of Songs, the two Songs of Moses; the Songs of Deborah, Hannah and the other Canticles or Odes). In different ways Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, was held te be present in this great lyrical collection, especially in the Psalms. As a matter of fact, according to the Gospels Jesus applied words of the Psalms to himself, and in the Apostolic writings Jesus's words and actions are seen as the fulfilment of the promises of the Psalms.

Moreover, the New Testament itself presented lyrical compositions. The Gospel of Luke has the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc dimittis*. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 13 we find the poetical description of the manifestations of Christian love. 1 Timothy 3,16 is a poem in six short verses on the *sacramentum pietatis*. In 1 Peter 2,21–24

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[1] Col. 3,16; Eph. 5,18–19.

[2] *Psalmi* the biblical Psalms, *hymni* the Song of the three children in the furnace (Daniel 3) and *cantica* the other Songs of the Old Testament (the songs of Moses, Deborah, Hannah, Habakkuk, etc.): see A. Bastiaensen, '*Psalmi*, *hymni* and *cantica* in early Jewish-Christian tradition', in: Elisabeth Livingstone (ed), *Studia Patristica* 21, Leuven / Louvain 1989, 15–26.

Christ's patience is praised in a series of verselike relative clauses. Many are the *cantica* in Revelation, the songs of praise glorifying the victory of the Lamb, sung by the Elders and other celestial beings. So the young Church had her poetical heritage, interpreted in a New Testament christological sense, and she herself made her own contribution to the composition of lyrical poetry. From its first generation on Christianity was familiar with the poetical expression of spiritual experience. And it were most of all the Psalms, understood as prophecy of the coming of Christ, that provided the material needed.

I. *The Hymns for the Daily Hours*

a. *Hilary*

The patristic tradition is in line with the New Testament approach. In the Latin West Hilary in the fourth century has David prophesying in the Psalms the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection, glorification, rule and sitting in judgment of Jesus Christ.[3] A few decades later Augustine's extensive commentary of the Psalter discovers Jesus Christ and his work of salvation in one Psalm after the other. Psalmody was also the core of the liturgy of the Daily Hours that took shape, in the fourth and fifth century, in the churches and in the oratories of the new monastic institutions. And manifold were the connections between the reciting or singing of the Psalms and the texts of the great Christian poets of those years. In this field Hilary, already mentioned, was a pioneer. It is a pity that from his poetry only a few remnants have been preserved. But these still provide much information. First of all, the connection between his poems and the Psalms is underlined by the motto prefacing his collection of hymns. It is an iambic distich on David, who with his hymns, *id est* the Psalms, announced the coming of Christ: "*Felíx prophéta Dávid prímus órgani / in cárne Chrístum hýmnis múndo núntiáns*". 'The prophet David who in the past gladly playing on his psaltery announced with his hymns to the world Christ's coming in the flesh'. Secondly, of the three partially preserved hymns two are alphabetical ones, the stanzas beginning with the successive characters of the

[3] *Instructio psalmorum* 6: *quae de corporalitate … et passione et morte et resurrectione et gloria et regno et iudicio David de eo in psalmis prophetat.*

alphabet. This particular kind of versification is not classical latin usage, but most probably derives from the Hebrew Psalter, where it appears in several Psalms, most markedly in the long Psalm 118[119]. Hilary's prose commentary on this Psalm shows that he knew about alphabetical prosody: he lists carefully the Hebrew characters. And finally, the third stanza of the first hymn presents an allusion to the communal reciting of the Psalms. The text, in classical prosody (shortened sapphic lines), reads *"Crédens té populús rogát / hýmnorúm resonás mítis ut aúdiás / vóces quás tibi cóncinít / aétas ómnigená, Sáncte, gregís tuí*". 'The faithful community asks You, that You may lovingly listen to the sweet-sounding hymns which people of every age in your flock sing together for You, Holy God'. The Lord is asked to listen to the songs of his people, which songs are the Psalms the community is going to recite. So, the hymn functions as an introduction to the psalmody that is about to begin. The *raison d'être* of the hymn is to open the recitation of the Psalms.

Hilary's poetry set an example with its alphabetical prosody and with the functioning of the hymn as introduction to the praying of the Psalms. As for influence of Commodian who wrote some alphabetical poetry, for instance *Instructio* 41, we must be cautious, as there is still uncertainty about the chronology and course of his life (varying from the third to the fifth century, and from Africa to Gaul). Of a relation with Hilary there is no evidence. A special case is also that of Augustine: we will come back to that. But on the whole alphabetical poetry becomes an accepted custom from the fifth century onwards. A fine example is Sedulius' charming hymn on the life of Christ: *"A sólis órtus cárdiné …. Beatus auctor saeculi….*". Another great alphabetical text from about the same time is "*Ápparébit répentína díes mágna dómini … Brévis tótus túm parébit prísci lúxus sáeculí …".* Viewed in perspective, Hilary's initiative was fruitful.

b. *Ambrose*

Most important for our research is the fact that Hilary's view of the hymn as preparation of psalmody is confirmed by later texts. One of these is the third stanza of the hymn for the evening *Deús creátor ómnium*, written by Ambrose of Milan in 'his' metre (the four feet iambus) and dating from about 380. The stanza reads "*Gratés perácto iám dié / et nóctis éxortú precés, / votí reós ut ádiuvés, / hymnúm canéntes sólvimús*." I think we must translate it as follows: 'We acquit our debt of gratitude (*grates*

solvimus) at the end of the day, we acquit our debt of prayers (*preces solvimus*) at the beginning of the night, by singing this hymn, asking You to help us, who have the obligation to pray (*voti reos*)', *id est* now that we must start praying, praying, that is, the Psalms'. The last two lines of Ambrose's hymn for the morning *Aetérne rérum cónditór* present the same idea: "*Te nóstra vóx primúm sonét / et vóta sólvamús tibi*". 'The first sound of our voice be dedicated to You, and let us acquit our debt of praying to You'. It is an invitation to begin the psalmody at the first hour of the day. That the hymn functions as introduction to the psalm-recitation appears also from the texts of old non-Ambrosian hymns for the daily hours. So the fourth stanza of the hymn for Sunday-morning *Primó diérum ómniúm*. It reads "*Ut quíque sácratíssimó / huiús diéi témporé / horís quiétis psállimús / donís beátis múnerét (Deus)*". 'That God with his gratifyings gifts reward us, who at the most holy moment of this day, in these hours of rest, sing our Psalms'. Likewise in the old hymn for the midday hour, the first stanza of which reads "*Dicámus laúdes dóminó / fervénte prómpti spíritú; / horá volúta séxiés / nos ád orándum próvocát*". 'Let us praise the Lord, prompted by fervent desire; the fact that six hours have revolved summons us to prayer', of the Psalms.

The relation between the hymn and the ensuing Psalms finds its expression also in the wording of the hymn. The first stanza of Ambrose's Christmas-hymn is a psalmword in metrical form. Psalm 79[80],2–3 asks God, Sheperd of Israel and enthroned upon the Cherubin, to give ear to and to look after Ephraim, to stir up his might: "*Qui regis Israhel intende, … qui sedes super Cherubin appare coram Ephraim …; excita potentiam tuam*". This changes into "*Inténde quí regis Ísraél, / supér Cherúbim quí sedés; / appáre Ephraém corám; excitá / poténtiám tuam ét veni*". The fifth stanza is a metamorphosis of Psalm 18[19],6–7 on the tent of the sun from which God comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber: "*In sole posuit tabernaculum suum, et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo; exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam*". Ambrose makes it a glorification of the birth from the Virgin Mary of God's Son, who, in his twofold nature, is going to run his earthly course: "*Procédat é thalamó suó, / pudóris aúla régiá, / geminae gigás substántiáe, / alácris út currát viám*" 'Let Him come forth from his chamber, the royal palace of inviolateness, the Giant in his two natures, that He runs his course with joy'.

c. *Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola*

The decades that spanned the transition from the fourth to the fifth century saw two other Christian poets at work: Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola. Prudentius wrote two collections of hymns, the *Cathemerinon* 'The Daily Round' and the *Peristephanon* 'Crowns of Martyrdom'. The first of the two contains pieces that in spite of their length seem to belong to a course of Daily Hours. A great hymn is the ninth: *Hymnus omnis horae* 'Hymn for every hour of the day'. Prudentius begins (v. 4–6) by mentioning the priest-king David who in his Psalms announced the coming of Christ. In the course of the hymn verses of Psalm 148, a 'Psalm of praise', appear in metrical form. So the Psalmword (v. 5) on the Creation: "*Ipse dixit et facta sunt, ipse mandavit et creata sunt*"' has become (in the eight feet trochee; v. 13): "*Ípse iússit ét creáta, / díxit ípse ét fácta súnt*". And the last lines of the hymn call, like the Psalm, all things created to unite and to extol God for ever and ever (v. 114): *ómnibús te cóncelébrent / saéculórum saéculís*. As to Paulinus of Nola, he honours the Psalms by clothing them in Latin classical form. Three of his *Carmina* are prosodically processed Psalms: *carmen* 7, 8 and 9 are adaptations of Psalm 1, 2 and 136(137). So Psalm 1, v. 1: "*Beatus vir qui non abiit in consilio impiorum*" is reproduced, in close imitation of Horace (*Ep.* 2,1), as "*Beátus ílle quí procúl vitám suám / ab ímpiórum ségregárit coétibús*". It is difficult to say whether or not these *carmina* were meant to function as part of an hour of communal prayer.

d. *Augustine*

A special case is that of Augustine, who, while master of Latin prose, wrote some poetry too. It was not in Ambrose's line, much as he admired the hymns of the man who took so great a part in his conversion. In the anti-donatist campaign of his first years as a pastor he composed a *Psalmus contra partem Donati*, 'A psalm against the supporters of Donatus', a long alphabetical poem of twelve-line stanzas, each line consisting of eight more or less regular trochees. The poem is an answer to a similar Donatist 'psalm'. As the Donatist following was for a large part of North-African, *id est* Phenician, descent, this kind of poetry could well go back to a semitic literary tradition, of which Hebrew poetry was also an offspring. But Augustine's poem certainly does not draw on the biblical Psalter.

II. *The Antiphons and Responses of the Daily Hours and the Eucharist*

The recitation of the biblical Psalms was the origin of liturgical poetry. Liturgy is communal praise of God, and it was the general conviction that there was no better expression of this praise than the one inspired by God himself. The texts of the Psalms, and of other biblical songs, functioned, in the churches and in the monastic communities, in the celebration of both the Daily Hours and the Eucharist. But we hear about many different kinds of execution. Frequent was alternation, between soloist and congregation, between choir and congregation, or between soloist and choir, sometimes between two choirs. The recitation of a Psalm was often regularly interrupted by the recitation of a verse from that Psalm, that was seen as particularly expressive of the contents of the celebration. While a choir or a soloist was reciting the Psalm, this verse, called 'response', was interposed at regular intervals by the congregation. Sometimes there was a short alternation between two verses or two verse-halves, called 'versicle' and 'response' respectively. In another form of execution the uninterrupted recitation of the Psalm was preceded and followed by the recitation of the important verse from the Psalm, the 'antiphon'. But there were many variations, and it is not always clear what the terms 'responses' and 'antiphons' exactly stand for. But so much is clear that they marked a special verse of the Psalm that was recited. On Easter Day for instance verse 24 of Psalm 117[118]: "*Haec dies quam fecit Dominus; exsultemus et laetemur in ea*", used as an antiphon or as a response, gave a special colour to the Psalm as a whole, fitting it for the liturgy of Eastern. In the same way verse 2 of Psalm 97[98]: "*Notum fecit dominus, alleluia, salutare suum, alleluia*", appropriate for the celebration of Chrismas, made the Psalm it was taken from a regular Christmas-Psalm. It was a frequently applied device, and in this way too, the Psalter played a key role as a literary repertory for liturgical celebrations.

III. *The Sequentia*

In the verse "*Notum fecit dominus, alleluia, salutare suum, alleluia*" the twofold insertion of *alleluia* catches the eye. Although not belonging to Psalm 97[98], *alleluia* is a word that stems from the Psalms, specifically

from the Psalms of praise.[4] It is of crucial importance, as it sums up the essence of psalmody, *(H)allelu-ia* meaning 'Praise God, praise the Lord'. The expression passed into Greek and Latin psalmody in its original Hebrew form. In the Latin West it was set to music and developed into a song of rejoicing, with a protracted melody on the final vowel 'a'. This melody consisted of a series of *melismi*, arrangements of notes, together constituting a *sequentia*, a sequence, a continuation of the *alleluia*-song. Now, every single note of these *melismi* was loosened from its 'a' and provided with a spoken syllable, to the effect that the *melismi* formed into words and the words into poetry, called *sequentia* just like the original melody. On the question why this device of 'setting words to music' came to be applied opinions differ, but everybody agrees that it stood at the cradle of beautiful liturgical poetry.

Because of its origin this poetry was free from metrical or other prosodical rules. But the alternation of two choirs caused the same *melismus* to be sung twice in different wording. As a result, stanzas were born. The *sequentia* became a succession of pairs of stanzas. Besides, elements of rime and assonance entered into the texture. Finally, in the first centuries of the second millennium, great poems in the form of *sequentia*'s were written by Adam of Saint Victor and Thomas Aquinas. Thomas wrote for the newly instituted feast of Corpus Christi the *sequentia* 'Lauda Sion Salvatorem', in its wonderful combination of doctrine and sentiment one of the major liturgical poems of the church of the thirteenth century (the rhyme pattern is an intricate one throughout: a a b / c c b):

Lauda Sion salva torem, /
lauda ducem et pas torem /
in hymnis et can ***ticis***.

Quantum potes tantum aude, /
quia maior omni laude /
nec laudare suff ***icis***.

It was a long way from the biblical *Alleluia* to *Lauda Sion*, but it was on a straight line through the centuries.

[4] Psalms 110[111]–113[114], 114[116]–117[118], 134[135]–135[136], 145[146]–150.

IV. *A survival of the pre-Christian past: addressing the deity*

a. *From the old to the new religion*

Christian baptism was a rebirth, and the Christians felt themselves reborn people. In the foregoing I have tried to demonstrate that this rebirth showed itself in the field of letters too. On the other hand it would seem that elements of the religious language of the pre-Christian past maintained themselves in the new surroundings. This is particularly clear for the way in which God, the Lord God, is addressed in Christian public prayer.

From the texts of pre-Christian prayers it appears that in addressing the deity the supplicant had to observe certain forms. An old prayer to Mars, quoted by the elder Cato in his *De agricultura*,[5] begins with the words *Mars Pater*, 'Father Mars'. Just the name of the god does not suffice. A predicate is added to honour him and to express one's confidence in him. This way of opening a prayer often results in an appeal to the deity by spelling out his or her titles. Catullus calls the goddess Diana successively *Latonia* 'the daughter of Leto', *maximi magna progenies Iovis* 'the noble offspring of the great Juppiter', *Lucina* 'the goddess who helps women in labour', *Trivia* 'the goddess of the forked roads', *Luna* 'the moongoddess'.[6] In Vergil's *Aeneis* the priests of Hercules honour their god with different predicates and glorify his great deeds: "*Tu nubigenas, invicte, bimembris, … tu Cresia mactas prodigia et vastum Nemeae sub rupe leonem; te Stygiae tremuere lacus, te ianitor Orci … Salve, vera Iovis proles*". 'You, born from the clouds, invincible, in your twofold shape, …You kill the Cretan monster and the big lion hidden in the rock at Nemea; You were the terror of the Stygian waters, the terror of the netherworld…. Hail to you, truly offspring of Jupiter'.[7] An important feature here is the *anaphora*, the repetition, at the beginning of each clause, of the pronoun of the second person *tu, te*, enhancing, through its directness, the urgency of the appeal. We may compare the prayer to the goddess Isis in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius: "*Te colunt superi, … tu rotas orbem, … tibi respondent stellae, …. tuo nutu spirant flamina, … tuam maiestatem perhorrescunt aves caelo meantes*". 'The celestial beings honour you, … you make the firmament turn, … the stars obey you, …

[5] *De agricultura* 141,2.
[6] *Carmen* 34,5–16.
[7] *Aeneis* 8,293–301.

at your command the winds blow, … at your majesty the birds tremble that sail along the sky'.[8]

In several respects the Christian liturgical writers, when drafting their texts, followed this traditional pagan practice. As Mars was addressed with the predicate *pater*, so the Christian God was addressed with his predicates, the qualities which endeared him to the faithful: *domine deus noster* 'Lord, our God'; *omnipotens sempiterne deus* 'almighty, eternal God'; *omnipotens et misericors deus* 'almighty, merciful God'. The spelling out of his titles was also Christian practice. So in a hymn for Christ, *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*, dating from the fourth or fifth century, with *anaphora* of the second person singular. From the third line on the text (in eight feet trochees) reads: "*Tú Deí de córde Vérbum, tú viá, tu véritás, / Iésse vírga tú vocáris, té leónem légimús, / déxtra Pátris, móns et ágnus, ánguláris tú lapís*….". 'You, the Word from God's heart, You the Way, You the Truth, / You are called the offshoot of the tree of Jesse; we read You are the Lion; / You are the Right Hand of the Father, Mountain and Lamb, You the Cornerstone …'. This hymn did not make the Book of Daily Hours, but two marvellous creations did: the O-antiphons and the *Te Deum*.

b. *The O-antiphons*

The seven O-antiphons escort the *Magnificat* of Vespers in the week before Christmas. Antiphons, originally, were psalmverses and other biblical quotations, but it did not take much time for liturgical invention to produce its own poetry, of biblical inspiration, but in a new literary shape. The O-antiphons, of early composition,[9] welcome and honour the Son of God, about to make his entry into the world. They address him with biblical predicates heralded with an admiring 'Oh': *O Sapientia* 'Oh Wisdom', *O Adonai* 'Oh Lord', *O radix Iesse* 'Oh offspring of Jesse', *O clavis David* 'Oh Key of the house of David', *O Oriens* 'Oh rising Sun', *O rex gentium* 'Oh king of the nations', *O Emmanuel* 'Oh Emmanuel'. In each antiphon the homage is continued with another predicate and the end is a short but urgent formula of supplication. So the last

[8] *Metamorphoses* 11,25,3–5; for further information on this subject, see E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos. Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte religiöser Rede*, Darmstadt 1956[4], 143–157, 168–176.

[9] They appear in every old collection of antiphons: see R.-J. Hesbert, *Corpus antiphonalium officii* III,1 *Invitatoria et antiphonae* (Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta. Fontes 9), Roma 1968, 362–376.

antiphon, at Christmas Eve: "*O Emmanuel, rex et legifer noster, expectatio gentium et salvator earum: veni ad salvandum nos, domine deus noster*". 'Oh Emmanuel, our King and Legislator, Expectation of the nations, and their Saviour: come to liberate us, Lord, our God'. It is evident that the seven antiphons form one extensive prayer. They are marvellous Christian poetry, woven on a pagan loom.

c. *The* Te Deum

The *Te Deum* is a non-prosodical hymn, composed probably in the fifth century. It is a song of praise, on sun- and feastdays part of Matins, the service of morning prayer. Its structure is clear, as the one pervading thought is that of 'Glory to God'. After the setting of the tune in the first verses, that the whole world is full of God's praise, the citizens of God's two cities, the inhabitants of heaven and earth, proclaim his glory. First the angels and all celestial beings: their song is the one they are said in the Bible to sing (Isaiah 6,3): 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord of hosts': heaven and earth are full of the majesty of his glory. The earth is full through its worthy inhabitants too: apostles, prophets, martyrs, all holy members of the Church. They all honour the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then the prayer focuses on the Son and his work of salvation for mankind. And it concludes with the prayer that all servants of Christ may live with his saints in eternal glory. The central point of the hymn is the biblical song of the angels, linking heaven and earth in the praise of God. And all the time the hymn addresses God and his Son in the second person singular in *anaphora*-position: *tu*, *te*, *tibi*: "*Te Deum laudamus, Te Dominum confitemur … Tibi omnes angeli … Tu rex gloriae …Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes … Te ergo quaesumus …*". The *Te Deum* is an impressive song, extolling God's supreme excellence in an efficient poetic device of the pagan past.

Conclusion and Summary

It was my intention in this essay to demonstrate that the poetry of the Bible engendered the poetry of Christian prayer. The hymn functioned as introduction to the psalmrecitation of the canonical hours of praying. The antiphon was a psalmverse that brought out the character of a celebration. The pre-Christian religious past however made itself felt in the way the deity was addressed, a survival of pagan custom.

THE SAINT AS PREACHER: REMARKS ON A RARE MOTIF IN LATE ANTIQUE AND MEDIEVAL POETRY

H. Müller

1. *Preliminary remarks*

The title of this volume, 'Poetry and Exegesis', combines two concepts that, strictly speaking, belong to different categories: whereas poetry is a formal category, denoting all sorts of texts in verse, exegesis has to do with content and can theoretically be expressed in any literary form. It is historically in particular linked to the sub-literary form of homily: the interpretation of the Bible is not an independent art, but takes place in a certain liturgical context for a certain reason, namely, the education and edification of both baptised Christians and catechumens. The Christian biblical commentary takes its origins from these sermons of the Church fathers, rather than from the pagan classical commentary. But the exegetical knowledge communicated through sermons also influenced diverse poetic genres as well, both in the interpretation of single biblical episodes and in the well-known self-representation of the author as priest or teacher. Is there, however, a more direct link between the genres of Christian poetry and that of exegetical and / or parenetical homily as well? Is homily also a formal element in Christian poetry, taking the place occupied by the protagonists' direct speech in pagan epic, in a kind of Christian transformation? Most Christian epic poems have a protagonist who is a preacher, a saint or evangelist or Christ himself, and it would only be logical for the poet to give him long direct speeches. There are also biblical predecessors for the combination of sanctity, even martyrdom, and preaching: not only Christ, but also St Stephen the arch-martyr, the report of whose lapidation is preceded by a long sermon-like speech. Theoretically, the insertion of sermons into Christian poems would have had several obvious advantages. The Christian religion is an extremely interpretative one, where the historical facts need to be commented upon or linked to each other, as in prophecy-fulfilment, typus-antitypus. The whole complex struc-

ture of the history of salvation is the result of careful explanation and disposition of the given data. Therefore the Christian epic poet has every need for poetic forms that go beyond mere narrative; and both by length and by authority, an apostle's or saint's homily could be regarded as ideal for this purpose. It is worthwhile, therefore, if such a literary motif can be construed almost logically from the history of both the genre and its prosaic predecessors, to investigate where and how this has actually been put into effect, and why (to anticipate my major result) it is so unexpectedly rare. Finally, a remarkable medieval exception to the rule, the *Vita sancti Clementis* by Carus of Metz, will be analysed.

2. *Sermons in Biblical Epic*

Extensive direct speech uttered by the hero is a central formal element of classical epic, containing narrative flashbacks, prophecy, exhortation or admonition; but it is largely absent from biblical epic. In the first generation of late antique Christian epic, namely the biblical paraphrases of Juvencus and Sedulius, as well as Old Testament paraphrases of the fifth century, the protagonists are rarely given the opportunity of saying more than the short remarks necessary for the progress of the story and certainly never anything that was not already said in the prose original. In direct speech even more than anywhere else, the authors seem to exercise every precaution not to violate their canonical prose models.[1]

This abstinence with regard to a classical element of epic poetry, however, can only partly be explained by the Christian poet's obligatory fidelity towards the sacred text.[2] It seems that early Christian

[1] Cf. Reinhart Herzog's characterisation of Juvencus' style: "Man begegnet erstmals dem in der christlich-hexametrischen Paraphrase für Jahrhunderte verbindlichen Erzählstil: es liegt eine bei aller inhaltlichen Verwandlung oft bis in die syntaktische Reproduktion der Vorlage treue versifizierende Paraphrase vor, deren hauptsächliche Änderung am biblischen Stil die Umwandlung der direkten in indirekte Reden oder in Abstraktionen ist" (R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike. Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*. Band 1, München 1975 [Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der schönen Künste 37], 91).

[2] This characteristic of biblical epic is so obvious that it is hardly ever remarked upon by scholars; indeed, there is much more interest in the (sometimes minor) transformations the poets make than in the overall identity of poetic subject-matter and prose original.

epic poets, consciously distancing themselves from classical Vergilian traditions, abstained from most standard *ornatus* or at least used it very considerately. Thus, epic catalogues, examples and ekphrases, visions and dreams, parallel strands of narrative and free movement within the timeline exist only as rare exceptions to a general rule of narrative simplicity. This lack of adornment is not only the consequence of either an equally restrained prose model or of the jejune school technique of rhetorical paraphrasis that according to a widely accepted theory is one of the roots of biblical epic:[3] it rather seems to stem from the authors' literary intentions, as can be shown most easily in those instances where the Bible itself would have given occasion to traditional epic ornament, only for Juvencus or Sedulius to ignore it. This can be demonstrated better in Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale* than in Juvencus' almost purely paraphrasing *Evangeliorum Libri IV*,[4] for Sedulius handles his prose model more freely and selectively and sometimes even adds more substantial poetic embellishment. Still, he uses this liberty most sparingly and un-epically. I cite as an example the story of Christ's birth from Luke 1 f. and Matthew 2. Here, the Gospels offer obvious starting-points for a lot of literary elements that could be regarded as typically epic: several independent narrative threads (John the Baptist's birth, Christ's birth, Herod and the Wise Men from the east), lurid and dramatic episodes (the child murder at Bethlehem, the flight to Egypt) and a chain of dreams and visions (the dream of Zacharias, the Annunciation, the appearance of the angel before Joseph, the dream of the Magi). It would have been very easy to model this entire story-line on analogous Vergilian scenes and give it a proper epic feeling. But only in a single instance does Sedulius do so (thus implicitly highlighting the fact that neither ineptitude nor the humble origins of the genre keep him from becoming a truly Vergilian poet): when he fashions the story of the child murder in a traditional epic manner, with a short simile[5]

[3] Cf. especially M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*, Liverpool 1985 (ARCA 16); the assertion that biblical epic derives solely or mainly from the rhetorical exercise of *paraphrasis* is justly contested by Herzog (n. 1) 63–68.

[4] "Es handelt sich bei seiner (i. e. Juvencus') Paraphrase nicht sowohl um eine Möglichkeit epischer Darstellung als um ein Übersetzungsmedium. Juvencus schreibt mit dem Anspruch, die Bibel selbst vorzulegen" (Herzog [n. 1], 93).—Cf. Jerome's characterisation of Juvencus' epic: *Iuvencus … quattuor evangelia hexametris versibus paene ad verbum transferens quattuor libros conposuit* (vir. ill. 84), but see also Green's contribution in this volume.

[5] 2,110–115 … *ceu leo frendens, / cuius ab ore tener subito cum labitur agnus, / in totum movet*

and the depiction of the mothers' woe.[6] The events accompanying the birth of St John the Baptist are left out; the dreams and visions are likewise missing or only told very shortly.[7] Thus, even one of the most clearly Vergilian passages in the *Carmen Paschale* if read the other way round, shows how distant the author still is from the classical epic models he imitates.

Nowhere is this formal abstinence more clearly visible than in regard to direct speeches. Abbreviation of direct speeches in the Gospel text is a typical feature of Juvencus' poem;[8] in later biblical epic, where the selective and interpretative elements are more frequent, direct speeches are preferably left out or are rephrased.[9] I name two extensive and important speeches from the New Testament that are especially relevant for our problem, because they can both be (and usually are) regarded as sermons: the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7) and St Stephen's speech in front of his judges (Acts 7,2–53). Both speeches have not survived in the relevant epic versions. Juvencus gives an extensive and complete paraphrase of the Sermon on the Mount (1,454–727), but his much more influential follower Sedulius substitutes it by an independent moralising interpretation of the Lord's Prayer (2,231–300). Obviously, while trying to avoid the long direct speech, he cannot ignore the content and structural functionality of the sermon and has to find a compromise that fits into the moralising poem without stylistic discrepancy. Of the original direct speech, nothing is left but two words from Christ to his listeners.[10] The longest speech of the Acts of the Apostles, St Stephen's sermon-like plea in front of his judges, is left out

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arma gregem manditque trahitque / molle pecus, trepidaeque vocant sua pignera fetae / nequiquam et vacuus implent balatibus auras: / *haut secus Herodes* ….

[6] 2,123–126 *haec laceros crines nudato vertice rupit, / illa genas secuit, nudum ferit altera pugnis / pectus et infelix mater (nec iam modo mater) / orba super gelidum frustra premit ubera natum.*

[7] 2,34 *angelus intactae cecinit properata Mariae*; 23,101 f. *tunc caelitus illi / per somnum moniti contemnere iussa tyranni* eqs.

[8] K. Thraede, 'Epos', in: *RAC* 5, 983–1042 (esp. 1023); C.P.E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity. The Paschale Carmen of Sedulius*, Leiden / New York / København / Köln 1988 (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 2), 54sq.: "he often streamlines the discourses of Jesus".

[9] Springer (n. 8) 68, regards this as a mere technical problem: "Juvencus … runs into difficulties when he tries to paraphrase the longer discourses of Jesus (e.g., the sermon on the mount, the parables, or the high priestly prayer). … By choosing to emphasize miracles, Sedulius sidesteps the problem by practically eliminating discourse altogether." Springer does not, however, explain any further what exactly is so difficult about paraphrasing direct speech.

[10] 2,231–235 *Quin etiam celerem cupiens conferre salutem / orandi praecepta dedit, iudexque*

in Arator's poetic version, save for an indirect quotation transformed and adopted by the narrator himself.[11] St Stephen is represented solely as martyr, not as preacher, a fact that given his archetypal function has widely influenced the depiction of saints in hagiography.[12]

On the other hand, this extensive abandonment of almost the whole canon of epic forms cannot be caused solely by the poets' desire to distance themselves from their pagan predecessors either. After all, opposition is not a plausible motivation for a hexameter (and thus at least partly classical) poem: instead, new forms of poetic amplification and *ornatus* are immediately developed from the exegetical models of typology and allegory. The biblical epic thus evolves into a new genus with primarily didactic, more precisely catechetical aims.[13] By borrowing formal elements from biblical commentary and homily, the epic poet likens his own role to that of the priest and his work to homiletic or catechetical teaching.[14] Thus he not only finds a new legitimisation for his work but unfortunately also new formal restrictions, especially concerning the use of direct speech. A preacher cannot quote extensively

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*benignus / indulgenda peti breviter iubet, ut cito praestet, / sic dicens: "**Orate patrem**", baptismate nostrum, / iure suum* eqs.

[11] 1,593f. *Lapides, Iudaea rebellis, / in Stephanum lymphata rapis, quae crimine duro / saxea semper eris*, after Acts 7,51 *dura cervice et incircumcisi cordibus et auribus, vos semper spiritui sancto restitistis* (from which we would expect *saxea semper eras*!).

[12] Cf. J. Schwind, *Arator-Studien*, Göttingen 1990 (Hypomnemata 94), 40 on further speeches omitted by Arator.

[13] Cf. M. Mazzega, *Sedulius, Carmen paschale*, Buch III, Basel 1996 (Chresis. Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur V), 17sqq.—Sedulius himself explains in his dedicatory letter to Macedonius his intention of imparting his own catechetical schooling to others, and of thus strengthening its moral implications in himself: *id ipsum parvi fomitis nutrimentum … nefas esse pensabam muti tenacitate silentii cum nullo partiri, ne unius talenti creditam quantitatem dum nitor cautius custodire, culpa defossae pecuniae non carerem. Invidiae siquidem maculam de sese non abluit qui alteri conferre denegat, quod cum dederit non amittit. Inter diversas tamen anxiae trepidationis ambages ad iaciendum huius operis fundamentum ob hoc maxime provocatus accessi, ut alios exhortationibus veritatis ad frugem bonae messis invitans, si quando infirmitatis humanae vitiis forsitan lacessitus inpugner, verbis propriae disputationis ammonitus metuam, et qui furta prohibui fur fieri verear, et qui rectae soliditatis iter ostendi proclivioris lubrici periculosa sectari et clipeo dominicae protectionis armatus inimicae iaculationus tela facili repulsione contemnam* (*ep. ad Maced.* p. 4,1–15).—This catechetical motivation can be easily reconciled with Herzog's concept of 'erbaulich' (edifying); cf. the subtitle of his book "Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung" (n. 1).

[14] Again, this is especially true for Sedulius, who by directly addressing his audience establishes himself as the teacher of the faith (I 37–59 *mentes huc advertite cuncti. Hanc constanter opem laesis adhibete medullis* eqs.). Cf. Springer (n. 8) on 5,94–96: "Indeed, in this narrative intrusion, Sedulius resembles a Christian preacher as much as he does an epic poet" (92). Springer certainly goes too far by stating that "the fifth-century poet conceived of himself as a latter day evangelist" (53).

from sermons or speeches without confusing his listeners; except for short role-play and imagined dialogues, he has to be the only speaker present.[15] There is not only a didactical, but also a situational and even a moral obstacle in the pseudo-liturgical frame evoked by the proximity to homily: even preachers that frequently indulge in a bit of dramatic representation from the pulpit[16] would seek to avoid the difficulties implied in identifying themselves with a holy man or with God himself. The more the Christian poet approaches the role of a teacher of the Faith, the less he can be a Vergilian poet.

There are significant exceptions from this 'de-epification' of Christian hexameter poems, notably one that has already been mentioned before: Alcimus Avitus, in his *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, without any inhibition follows the literary lead of Vergil as well as the allegorising tendencies of homily and commentary. This is a fascinating experiment and for a very long time was not having any followers: for the most part, the poets of the Middle Ages did not dare to imitate him.

3. *Sermons in Hagiographic Poetry*

Things are very different in hagiographic poetry: there is no canonical text to stem the poets' flow of inspiration, no—even virtual—liturgical frame to force them into a more cautious way of talking, and it is small wonder that the archegetes of the genre experimented much more freely with poetic form and poetic *ornatus* than the versificators of the Bible. Luckier than these, they could even use biblical models as an incitement for their own poetic inspiration. Besides the one already mentioned, St Stephen's speech in Acts, there are other important prototypes: the martyrdom of the Maccabees and their mother in Macc 4, and the three youths in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). The possibility of amplifying or even inventing speeches to be put in a saint's mouth is therefore not a priori excluded: the protagonists in Prudentius' *Peristephanon* are often given long direct speeches, a feature reminiscent of their biblical prose models; and these speeches are clearly not transformed from a prose model, but invented by the poet himself. But are such speeches 'sermons'? Not every direct speech uttered by an exem-

[15] On the epic poet's self-portrayal as preacher or teacher see Springer (n. 8), 92 (on Sedulius); Schwind (n. 12), 179sqq. on Arator.

[16] This can certainly be said of Augustine, cf. e.g. *in psalm.* 61,16.

plary Christian or even a priest (if we follow Michael Roberts in stressing the 'ecclesiastical' character of Prudentius' martyrs)[17] can be called a sermon; and in the case of Prudentius' poems, there are historical arguments against doing so. The formative elements for hagiographic poetry are clearly adapted from prose hagiography which in its turn goes back to a sub-literary form, the *acta martyrum*, which consist in large part of dialogues between the martyr and the interrogating magistrate. The space given these characters for expounding their faith is also at the disposal of Prudentius' protagonists; even if they use it in a moralising or even protreptic manner, they can hardly be regarded as preachers. Failing the adequate ambience and at least a hinted-at liturgical frame, these speeches present a problem of definition that I shall try to illustrate by taking two examples from the *Peristephanon* poems that are particularly rich in direct speech.

In both instances, there is not only a special significance in this concentration on direct speeches, but they also contain homiletic elements. *Peristephanon* 2 on St Lawrence has a narrative structure obviously dependent on the narrative of the martyrdom of St Stephen[18] and is centred around the two long direct speeches of the martyr, namely, the invective in front of the *praefectus urbi* (185–312) and the prayer for the conversion of Rome which he utters while being tortured on the grid (413–484). In analogy to St Stephen, the first speech could be called a sermon: Lawrence, who as a deacon indirectly takes part in the annunciation of the Word, speaks if not in the church itself, at least in close proximity to it.[19] If the actual addressee of the speech, a single Roman magistrate, may seem a rather small audience for a sermon, the whole congregation is present in the background: in the shape of the poor that have been called together by Lawrence to represent the riches of the Church. This sermon, however, is no more successful than

[17] M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs. The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius*, Ann Arbor (Mich.) 1993, Chapter 4: The Martyr as Bishop and Teacher, 109–129. Roberts illustrates this by the martyrdom of St Cyprian (perist. 13). However, Cyprian (who is a special case anyway, as he was well known for his writings and for his episcopal office alike) has only one longer direct speech in the poem, which is a solitary prayer, not a sermon in public (55–69). Cyprian prays for his flock to follow him into martyrdom (instead of exhorting them to do so), which results in the death of the *Massa Candida*. Like Romanus in *perist.* 10 and like Lawrence's teacher Xystus in *perist.* 2., Cyprian teaches by way of his example, not his preaching.

[18] Lawrence is likened to Stephen in 369–372: *talemque et ille praetulit / oris corusci gloriam / Stefanus per imbrem saxeum / caelos apertos intuens*.

[19] 164 *pro templo*; 178 *ad sacratam ianuam*.

its biblical model: like the judges in Jerusalem, the Roman prefect is enraged instead of converted by the speech; like Stephen, Lawrence is tortured to death. It is here, in the torture scene, that we see the actual significance of Lawrence's speech: it prepares his prayer for Rome's conversion. His failure as a speaker on Earth prepares his role as a much more successful advocate and even consul in Heaven.[20]

This connection between the reason for Lawrence's martyrdom and the high rate of direct speech allotted to him in the poem goes even further; for if *Peristephanon* 10, the hymn on Romanus, has been called a Christian (para)tragedy,[21] the hymn on Lawrence is akin to another dramatic (and thus dialogic) form: it exhibits sporadic traits of comedy, culminating in Lawrence's well-known joke on the grid (401–440). Even earlier, when Lawrence reinterprets the prefect's order to hand over the Church's riches as referring to its poor, the prefect regards this as a pun at his expense: *"Ridemur" exclamat fremens / praefectus "ac miris modis / per tot figuras ludimur*" (313–315). Thus, there is another formal model for its direct speeches that has nothing to do with homily at all.

In the second case, in the long hymn on St Romanus in *Peristephanon* 10, the interdependence of martyrdom and the representation of the martyr as speaker is even closer. For Romanus' martyrdom is both motivated and exacerbated by his eloquence: the climactic series of tortures which is inflicted upon him is motivated every time by the invectives and professions of faith which he continuously utters; indeed, the *praefectus* Asclepiades endeavours to silence Romanus rather than force him to renounce his Christian belief. The torture culminates in a direct assault upon the culpable organ, Romanus' tongue; miraculously, the martyr does not fall silent even when his tongue is cut out. This story obviously had to be told in a chain of direct speeches uttered both by Romanus and his torturer. The series of speeches not only has an obvious narrative function, it also derives from more than one literary model: on the one hand from the martyrs' acts in prose, on the other hand from classical (Senecan) tragedy.[22] Both these models are non-liturgical and have certainly nothing to do with homily. In accordance with the generic laws of the *acta martyrum*, and contrary to

[20] Cf. 560 *perennem consulem*; 579 *per patronos martyras*.

[21] See the following note.

[22] W. Ludwig, *Die christliche Dichtung des Prudentius und die Transformation der klassischen Gattungen, in: Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en occident*, Vandœuvres–Genève 1997 (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 23), 303–363 (336 sq.).

every liturgical use, the hostile magistrate is permitted to answer back and expound his own pagan faith. Moreover, the words of Romanus are not aimed at persuading anyone by way of argument but at vilifying the enemy. As is shown in the episode of the young boy (661–845), Romanus converts by way of his example, not his speech. If there is a moral to be deduced from the story of the eloquent martyr, it has to do with the impossibility of subduing confession, not evangelisation. Direct speech in Prudentius' hymns on the martyrs in every case seems to have a clear individual function, but it is not that of a sermon.

There is another pair of archegetes of poetic hagiography, which could have been a starting-point for the 'sub-genus' of poetic homily: the two hexameter versions of the prose *Vita Martini* by Sulpicius Severus. Let us take a short look at the more popular and influential of the two, the four-book epic poem by Venantius Fortunatus. In accordance with the prose vita, Venantius almost never gives his protagonist room for free speech. Remarkably, almost all his speeches are directed not at his faithful followers or his monks, but at the enemy: the devil in person or a demon that has taken possession of a human or an animal.[23] Venantius treats Sulpicius' *Vita* as if it were a sacrosanct text. It seems impossible to add to historical truth (or to the prose version) except where the performative character of direct speech is explicitly needed: in exorcism. Apart from that, Venantius confines himself to versifying and slightly extending Martin's short authentic *dicta* reported by Sulpicius, but neither of them stylises Martin as a speaker, let alone a preacher.[24] In all versions of the *Vita*, the majority of direct speeches belongs to Martin's adversaries and the believers seeking his help.[25]

Let us summarise our findings so far: hagiographic poetry lends itself to long direct speeches more readily than biblical epic, but again there is no representative model for poetic sermons. In poetry, neither martyrs nor confessors are usually depicted as preachers; what they say is either based directly on the prose model or indispensable for the progress of the plot. Why is this so? Obviously, the authorial

[23] Cf. e.g. 1,95–101 (Martin in discussion with a demon); 462 sq. (Martin addresses a demon); 2,197–212 (Martin talks to a demon who provokes him); 3,310 sq. (Martin talks to a demon in his mind).

[24] 3,370–402. The longest of these versified *dicta* (392–402), on women's inability of leading a monastic life, could perhaps be regarded as a mini-sermon, although it is addressed to a single listener.

[25] Cf. e.g. *vit. Mart.* 1,389–413. 417–418 the father of a paralysed girl; 3,175–186 the mother of a dead boy; 187 sq. the attending people.

homiletic element we found in biblical poetry is also strongly visible and formative in hagiographic poetry; moreover, biblical epic itself had become an authoritative model to be adhered to in Christian narrative poetry. Irrespective of its possible origins in school paraphrasis, Christian poetry had by now established its own paraphrastic tradition, of which a central rule was to avoid direct speeches, to focus on the acts of the protagonists and not on their words.[26]

4. *A Medieval Counterexample: Carus of Metz,* Vita Sancti Clementis

It is of course impossible to survey the entire hagiographic material from the Middle Ages, but the poetic sermon does not seem to be a relevant genus there either. Walter Berschin gives a very short list of saints' lives, almost all of them in prose, that contain a sermon given by the saint.[27] In some cases, the sermon is authentic, taken from the saint's own works; in all of them, there is an exterior reason for the insertion of a homily. Berschin names only two verse examples, the *Metrum de vita sancti Galli* (883/84) by Notker I of St Gallen, from which Berschin himself edited an excerpted verse sermon,[28] and one very curious and remarkable poem that actually contains an extensive sermon and so is a significant exception to the rule.

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[26] An example for this suppression of direct speech, which is remarkable for its very irrelevancy, can be found in a passage in the *Vita Martini* discussed by Michael Roberts, the healing of a leper ('St Martin and the Leper: Narrative Variation in the Martin Poems of Venantius Fortunatus', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 4, 1994, 82–100; esp. 96–100). In Sulpicius' prose vita, Martin heals the leper by a kiss and a benediction: *leprosum miserabili facie horrentibus cunctis osculatus est atque benedixit* (Sulp. *vit. Mart.* 18,3). In Venantius' several versions, the kiss is preserved and the healing power of the Saint's spittle is elaborated on, but the (verbal) benediction is mentioned nowhere, let alone written out in direct speech. In the longest passage (*vit. Mart.* 1,487–513), the finite verb *benedixit* is transformed into an adjective participle referring to Martin's spittle: *Improvisus enim hunc sanctus ad oscula traxit / astringensque virum fuso medicamine laxat. / Nam simul ut tetigit* ***benedictas*** *ore salivas, / effugit unguiferum languoris sarcina tactum* eqs. (Ven. *vit. Mart.* 2,494–497). There seems to be no cogent reason for this alteration unless we assume a general tendency of avoiding (even short) direct speeches. In Paulinus of Petricordia's versification of this episode (*vit. Mart.* 2,621–636), there is no mention of the benediction and no direct speech either.

[27] Walter Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter. IV: Ottonische Biographie. Das hohe Mittelalter. 920–1220 n. Chr.*, 1. Halbband: *920–1070 n. Chr.*, Stuttgart 1999 (Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters 12), 141 sq.

[28] Walter Berschin, 'Notkers Metrum de vita S. Galli. Einleitung und Edition', in:

The poem is the *Vita sancti Clementis*, the Life of Saint Clement of Metz, written around the year 1000 by a certain Carus, as he calls himself in his work,[29] who was probably a monk of St Clement in Metz and in all likelihood Irish.[30] It is preserved in a single Codex, Brussels 10615–729 175^{r}–178^{v}, the famous manuscript of the *Ecbasis cuiusdam captivi*, and was edited in 1937 by Karl Strecker.[31] The poem is not actually a full saint's life: its subject is solely the conversion of the inhabitants of Metz and their baptism by St Clement, a disciple of St Peter. But the narrative is very short (192 verses) compared to the sermon inserted into it (781 verses); so it seems to be no more than a frame for the sermon. There is a practical reason for this unusual structure: St Clement, the apostle and first bishop of Metz, was known only from the short report in Paul the Deacon's *De episcopis Mettensium*; the two known prose *Vitae* of the saint are derived from these few scant remarks.[32] Thus the long sermon at first seems to have a simple function—to elongate the description of a life that otherwise would have been necessarily very short. The poem belongs in the group of medieval poetic adaptations of saints' lives that owe their originality and poetic embellishment at least partly to the fact that nothing much was known about the saint in question.[33] The homily Clement delivers in Carus' poem seems to be

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Florilegium Sangallense. Festschrift für Johannes Duft zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. O.P. Clavadetscher (1980), 71–121 (115); cf. id., *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter. III: Karolingische Biographie 750–920 n. Chr.*, Stuttgart 1991 (Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters 10), 410sq.

[29] *Vita Clementis* 992 (see n. 31).

[30] See the metrical and historical arguments in Strecker, MGH poet. IV,109sq.; Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil IV*, 106.

[31] MGH poet. V,112–145.

[32] On the prose vitae see A. Prost, *Études sur l'histoire de Metz. Les légendes*, Metz / Paris 1865, 225–227; W. Levison, 'Die Anfänge rheinischer Bistümer in der Legende', *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 116 (1930), 5–28 (13–15), H.-W. Herrmann, 'Zum Stande der Erforschung der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Geschichte des Bistums Metz', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 28 (1963), 131–199 (149sq.), J.-Ch. Picard, 'Le recours aux origines. Les Vies de saint Clément, premier évêque de Metz, composées autour de l'an Mil', in: D. Iogna-Prat–J.-Ch. Picard (eds), *Religion et culture autour de l'an Mil. Royaume capétien et Lotharingie*, s. l. 1990, 291–299. There is one anonymous *vita* contemporary to our poem (Sancti Clementis primi Mettensis episcopi vita, translatio ac miracula, ed. H.V. Sauerland, Treveri 1896), which is completely derived from Paul the Deacon (ed. G. Pertz. MGH SS 2 [1829], 261–268). A more recent *vita*, stemming from the late XIth or early XIIth century, is considerably longer (Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum bibliothecae regiae Bruxellensis, 2, Brussels 1889 [Subsidia hagiographica 1], 487–502); interestingly, it also contains a sermon held by St Clement (cap. 9). Most probably the unknown author knew and imitated Carus' poem.

[33] Cf. e.g. the *Quirinalia* by Metellus of Tegernsee, a twelfth-century cycle of poems

as good a device as any to fill the gap of factual knowledge about the saint.[34] Yet there may be a better reason for inserting a poetic sermon, for which we have to take a short look at the text itself.

The poem begins as the prose versions do. The Pope, Saint Peter, sends Clement as bishop to the city of Metz, which is beset by a double plague: poisonous snakes threaten the bodies, pagan beliefs the souls of the citizens (1–12). After arriving in Metz, Clement, who is introduced by a long, if rather commonplace, catalogue of virtues (26–48), works the one miracle that is known of him:[35] he frees the city from the plague of snakes.[36] Taking off his stola and using it as a leash, he leads the biggest snake away to the floods of the River Seille (49–64); all the other snakes willingly follow their leader. Clement then shouts after them a short speech of victory, which God accentuates by enclosing the speaker in a radiant aureole (64–88). The citizens of Metz fall on their knees before him and ask for baptism, whereupon Clement, still standing at the borders of the River Seille, starts preaching. This (116) is where the narrative ceases and the sermon starts; it will last until verse 896.

The sermon begins with a verse paraphrase of the *Symbolum Athanasianum* (116–135), after which follows a rhythmical hymn which is virtually a doublet of this passage (136–163). This hymn, which because of its distinctive rhythmical verses forms one of Strecker's arguments for the Irish provenance of the poem, is structurally interesting, because it interrupts both the hexameter form of the poem and the homily. Obviously, the author was more interested in giving his poem a pseudo-liturgical feel than in adhering to realism.

Then the main part of the sermon (164–896) follows, a rapid consecutive narrative of the Old and New Testaments, partly allegorised, rather in the manner of Ekkehard's *Versus ad picturas* or similar col-

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on the Life of St Quirinus, in which both the poetic embellishment and the amplification is provided by the imitation of Horace's *Carmina* and Vergil's *Eclogues*, see P. Chr. Jacobsen, *Die Quirinalien des Metellus von Tegernsee*, Leiden / Köln 1965 (Mittellateinische Studien und Texte I).

[34] This is of course a technique already known from pagan poets who took the liberty of filling gaps in the narratives of traditional myths.

[35] The miracle is not mentioned by Paul the Deacon, but it is inserted in later manuscripts of his *De episcopis Mettensium* and of the prose *Vita Clementis* derived from it. See Levison (n. 32), 12–15.

[36] This is perhaps modelled on the famous miracle of St Patrick who according to legendary tradition freed the whole of Ireland from snakes, but it is a hagiographic topos found elsewhere as well.

lections.[37] The inserted allegories clearly point to scriptural commentaries as the sources of the whole passage. The list of parallels includes not only the Latin Church Fathers and Bede, but also Caesarius of Arles, Eucherius of Lyons' *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*, and Isidore of Seville's *In vetus testamentum quaestiones*; we may assume that the author did not collect these sources on his own, but used a catena. Indeed, some of the excerpts quoted correspond to what later became the *Glossa ordinaria*.[38] Further hymnic parts are interspersed into the narrative, falling into two categories. In one further instance (279–334), the hexameters are replaced by a rhythmical poem of equally narrative content, repeating the facts told in the hexameters immediately afterwards. It begins with the Fall of Man, which has been treated before, and goes on until John the Baptist. The following hexameter passage begins again with Cain and Abel. Although the metrically different passages could be expunged from the text without leaving a gap, they are not previously existing pieces quoted by Carus, as at least the second one obviously cannot stand on its own. On the other hand, the rhythmical passages are neither frequent nor varied enough for the poem to be characterised as polymetrical in the tradition of Boethius and Martianus Capella. There is a second form of hymnical elements in the verse sermon, namely hymnical elements in hexameters, the hymn to *fides* (660–684) and the hymn to *amor* (890–896) based on Hebrews 11.

It seems at first difficult to give a reason for the insertion of these hymnical passages. If they do have any other cause than a desire for variation and formal experiment on the author's part, it seems to be to give a more 'liturgical' feel to the text, to indicate that this is not merely an exhortatory speech on the banks of the River Seille, nor a didactical poem set into a narrative frame, but is meant to be part of a liturgical celebration. The poem does not, on the other hand, realistically describe a divine service: hymns and sermon are merged into one another. While the rhythmical parts are certainly out of place in a sermon, the hexameter 'hymns' need not be considered as an interruption. In fact they are a properly homiletic element, thus accentuating that the author meant it to be a sermon and not just a biblical paraphrase or a series of *tituli* or *versus memoriales*.

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[37] Cf. H. Leithe-Jasper, *Ekkehard IV, Versus ad Picturas Domus domini Mogontinae. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (unpublished dissertation), Vienna 2001.

[38] E.g. 375 sq. ~ *Isid. quaest. exod.* 4 (= Gloss. ord. ad loc.)

After the long biblical narrative, there follows a shorter parenetical passage separated by a narrative verse in the third person (897 *hec ait atque addens sacrato famine Clemens*). The preacher exhorts his audience to leave idolatry and accept the true faith (897–916).

Even without its setting in a conversion story from apostolic times, it would be obvious that this is a catechesis. It clearly follows the pattern laid out by Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus*, with a long narrative part on biblical history and a series of *praecepta* which form the end.[39] Among other things, Augustine postulates that the historical part of the *catechesis* be directed towards "love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1,5).[40] The poet follows this advice rather literally, inserting into his narrative one hymn to *amor* (i.e. *caritas*) and another to *fides*. And if Augustine immediately afterwards asserts that the Old Testament was written for the sole purpose of announcing the coming of Christ,[41] then Carus again shows this very ostensibly with his series of Christological allegories. It is evident why Carus follows Augustine's manual on *catechesis* so very closely: in Metz, around the year 1000, he could not have contemporary experience of adult baptism or the teaching preceding it.

Is this sermon then simply what Berschin in this context calls a "Katechismuspredigt", a medieval sermon of catechetical content and linked to its narrative frame by the fact that the speaker is a priest and a missionary? It is obviously more than that, a fact that becomes immediately clear if we return to the last part of the sermon. The *praecepta* given here differ considerably from those in Augustine's exemplary *catecheses*. They are not meant to instigate fear of God's judgement or hope for the resurrection, and they are not concerned with the temptations and moral delusions of the faithful.[42] They consist of one negative request (898–902):

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[39] Cf. the structure of the theoretical part of *De catechizandis rudibus* (3,7–6,10 *narratio*; 7,11–9, 13, *1 praecepta*); and the structure of the two exemplary catecheses (1: 16,24–24,45 narratio with moral interpretation, 25,46–49 moral *praecepta*; 2: 26,52–54 short narratio; 55 moral *praecepta*).—Cf. C. Mayer, 'De catechizandis rudibus', in: *Augustinus-Lexikon* 1,798–805.

[40] 3,6 *in omnibus sane non tantum nos oportet intueri praecepti finem, quod est caritas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta* (1 Tim. 1,5), *quo ea quae loquimur cuncta referamus, sed etiam* eqs.

[41] ibid. *Neque enim ob aliud ante adventum domini scripta sunt omnia quae in sanctis scripturis legimus, nisi ut illius commendaretur adventus et futura praesignaretur ecclesia.*

[42] *cat. rud.* 7,11 *Narratione finita spes resurrectionis intimanda est … tum vero instruenda et animanda est infirmitas hominis adversus tentationes et scandala* eqs. Cf. 25,46–49; 27,55.

Idola pestifera confestim linquite vana,
Mortua facta manu sunt artes demonis atri,
Et soli domino uosmet seruire parate.
Nunc uos peniteat dominum liquisse benignum
Et profugo zabulo iam colla subisse maligno

and three positive ones:

Incipe, plebs, sapiens proprium cognoscere patrem,
***Crede** deum patrem, qui te iam fecerat, unum,*
***Crede** patris natum consorti numine summum,*
Virgine qui natusque redemit sanguine mundum,
***Crede** quoque et flatum patre natoque profusum,*
Consimilem patri et nato sic robore sanctum.

While this part of the speech formally and structurally corresponds to Augustine's moral precepts, its contents are obviously taken from the baptismal *Ordo*: first the *abrenuntiatio*[43] and then the confession of the faith.[44] Here, as in the case of the hymns inserted into the sermon, different liturgical parts are merged into one another: what is the end of the catechetical sermon is also part of the following baptism rite. This necessitates a grammatical change: Carus replaces the dialogue form of the *Ordo* by the imperatives demanded by the Augustinian scheme; moreover, the bare questions of the speech are expanded by including elements from the Nicene Creed.[45] The obligatory answer

[43] *Abrenuntias satanae? Abrenuntio. Et omnibus operibus eius? Abrenuntio. Et omnibus pompis eius? Abrenuntio* ('Ordo baptismi parvulorum', in: *Rituale Romanum Pauli V pontificis maximi iussu editum … Editio typica*, Città di Vaticano 1952, 24; Ordo baptismi adultorum, ibid. 37. 57); for a medieval version see J. Baur, *Die Spendung der Taufe in der Brixner Diözese in der Zeit vor dem Tridentinum. Eine liturgie-kirchengeschichtliche und volkskundliche Studie*, Innsbruck 1938 (Schlern-Schriften 42), with many medieval parallels.

[44] *Credis in patrem omnipotentem, creatorem caeli et terrae? Credo. Credis et in Iesum Christum, filium eius unicum, dominum nostrum, natum et passum? Credo. Credis et in Spiritum sanctum, sanctam ecclesiam …? Credo.* (Ordo baptismi parvulorum [n. 42], 24 sq.; Ordo baptismi adultorum, ibid. 37 sq. 58 sq.).

[45] This is especially obvious in the part concerning the Holy Spirit, which is followed by a fourth imperative concerning the Last Judgement and the eternal Life taken from the confession of the Son in the *Symbolum* (907–916):

Crede quoque et flatum patre natoque profusum,
Consimilem patri et nato sic robore sanctum.
Sic tres personas uno cum numine crede,
Crede resurrectura et mortua corpora bustis.
Et anime proprie adsument tunc corpora uiua.
Arbiter aethereus summo cum regmine Christus
Tunc ueniet mundum librans examine totum,
Omne genus hominum censebit et ignea flamma.

of the catechumen is only given indirectly by the following narrative: *Credidit hiis populus* (917). The rest of the ceremony is again treated conventionally within the narrative frame of the poem: the benediction of the baptismal fount together with the instillation of chrism into it (920), the baptism itself (921 sq.), a prayer of thanks (923–925), another short rhythmical hymn (929 sq.),[46] and a benediction of the now faithful, concluding the celebration (931–945). A short exhortation to the citizens of Metz to honour St Clement like all countries honour their apostles concludes the poem (946–973).[47]

Once we have noticed the curious fusion of narrative, homiletic and liturgical elements in Carus' poem, it becomes plausible to regard the whole poem as the poetic transformation of a baptismal ceremony. This includes the first part of the narrative frame as well: when Clement expels the serpents that plague the citizens of Metz not only by action but also by speech, he performs the various elements of exorcism that precede the actual baptism in the rite.[48] The poet thus 'revives' the liturgical text by transforming it back into a story, by personalising the devil and his followers in the King of Snakes and his retinue. On the other hand, the parts of the Holy Office, also including the catechetical sermon, are either preserved verbally or very obviously alluded to, so as to turn the poem not only into a story of evangelisation and conversion, but a baptismal rite as well.

What does this mean for our overall question? As we have seen, instances of hagiographical sermons are not at all common, and Carus had no immediate models he could follow. If he included a sermon into his poem, thus departing conspicuously from the expected form of a saint's life, he did so for a poetic reason that went much further, in the context of which the sermon is only one component, if an extensive one. Clement is introduced as a preacher not simply because

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Post nigram meritis absument Tartara partem,
Candida pars dextra conscendet regna polorum.

[46] Before this hymn, there is another obvious liturgical allusion, this time to the Preface: 926 *mens tua tunc fuerat sursum, sanctissime Clemens*.

[47] Immediately after the end of the *Vita Clementis* a second fragmentary poem follows: it is entitled *Basilicas* (on this name see Strecker ad loc.) and describes the building and situation of various churches in Metz. It is not quite clear if this is a separate poem or a sort of appendix to the *Vita Clementis*.

[48] On baptismal exorcism rites see K. Thraede, 'Exorzismus', in: *RAC* 7, 44–118, (85 sqq.); Ordo baptismi parvulorum (n. 42), 23; Ordo baptismi adultorum, 45–57 passim.

he is a missionary and bishop, but because he performs the catechesis and the baptism that are the actual subject of the poem. This literary device is as singular and original as the inclusion of the rhythmical hymns into the sermon: not only does it not have any predecessors, but no followers either.[49] Thus, the insertion of a sermon into the narrative frame of the *Vita Clementis* is not a poetic embellishment or the filling of a gap because of the deficiency of biographical facts, but it is functional, insofar as it is made part of an abbreviated and condensed baptismal order—or rather what the poet thought a baptismal order to have looked like in the days of the apostles: hence the inclusion of the long narrative catechesis. In fact, the whole poem can scarcely be called a *Vita*, but should be renamed something like 'De conversione Mettensium'.

5. *Conclusions*

As this significant—if late—exception to the rule has indirectly shown again, long direct speech is not a common feature in Christian narrative poetry: whenever it exists, there has to be a good reason and, if possible, a literary model other than epic poetry: the *Acts of Martyrs* for Prudentius, a fictional baptismal liturgy for Carus of Metz. 'The Saint as Preacher' is invariably a sign of cross-over between two literary genera. Obviously, the genus of homily itself is not flexible enough to be adapted into the parameters of a poetic form, nor attractive enough to be used as an embellishment: it stands alone, and it requires a proper liturgical frame. On the other hand, the quasi-homiletic gesture of many late antique Christian poems made it awkward for them to be interrupted by direct speech. The poetic sermon embedded into a narrative context remains a plausible literary device that could have come into existence, but for several reasons did not; like many other elements of classical epic *ornatus*, it did not become part of the formal canon of the Christian epic. This negative result forces us to consider the few exceptions not as interdependent parts of an elusive thread of tradition but as separate cases. Moreover, it also shows how the genesis of a new

[49] The younger prose *vita*, which also contains a sermon (see n. 33), shows no signs of this complicated liturgical structure. Here, the sermon is simply exhortatory. The pagan audience is immediately converted by it and asks for Clement's help; after he has expelled the snakes, he baptises the people of Metz.

literary genre involves the adoption of some traditional devices and the rejection of others, according not so much to narrative necessity or a new standard of poetic *aptum* but to the changed self-representation of the poet. This may be a step towards an answer to the vexing question why late antique Christian poetry, together with its medieval continuation, is so rarely truly 'Vergilian' (and therefore, for readers used to classical epic, sometimes so unattractive). Being a Christian poet meant defining oneself by using new, and predominantly ecclesiastic, rolemodels and accepting the formal restrictions accompanying them.

POETRY AND SUFFERING: METRICAL PARAPHRASES OF EUCHERIUS OF LYONS' *PASSIO ACAUNENSIUM MARTYRUM*

K. Pollmann

Eucherius narrates in his *Passio Acaunensium Martyrum*[1] that during the persecution under Diocletian a whole army of Christian soldiers from the Egyptian Thebais, under their leader Mauritius, was killed at Acaunum in the Swiss Alps. The soldiers died as martyrs because they refused to obey the emperor's order to fight against fellow-Christians. This brief prose narrative had a rich textual transmission and manifested its influence both in places of worship and a rich iconographic tradition up to the late Middle Ages.[2]

A further aspect of the *Passio*'s reception manifests itself in various versifications of this story that have so far hardly attracted any attention and will be the topic of this investigation. The poetic paraphrases of Venantius Fortunatus, Walafrid Strabo, and Sigebert of Gembloux will be analysed both regarding their poetic technique, their literary intention and socio-historical context, and highlighting the most important changes in these paraphrases in comparison with their prose hypotext. Particular attention will be paid to the question whether, and if yes, to what extent one can observe (a) specific exegetical additions only possible because of the versification, and (b) significant changes as regards the paraphrastic technique and characteristics through the ages, namely, from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, as exemplified by the selected authors.

[1] Ed. B. Krusch, *MGSS rer. Merov.* 3 (1896) 20–41. A new edition with German translation and notes is planned under the direction of Otto Wermelinger (Fribourg).

[2] The latest research on a broad variety of aspects can be found in O. Wermelinger et al. (eds), *Mauritius und die Thebäische Legion*, Fribourg 2005.

A. *Introduction*

It is a striking fact that the legendary martyrdom in Acaunum, today St-Maurice, Canton of Valais, Switzerland, in the then Diocese of Octodurum, of a whole Christian Legion recruited in the Egyptian Thebais[3] (and hence called the Theban Legion) under Diocletian and Maximian in around 303 triggered a rich literary and iconographic tradition starting only about 150 years later with the relatively short prose narrative by Eucherius of Lyons written after Eucherius had become bishop in around 434.[4] The archaeological evidence points to cult and worship at Acaunum beginning already in the fourth century.[5] But before Eucherius we do not have any written sources at all.[6] Therefore it is not astonishing that the historical validity and veracity of Eucherius' report and its later prose revisions are a central issue in current scholarship.[7] There is still no consensus in this question and this paper does not intend to deal with it. The most striking aspect of this particular story is the sheer mass of martyrs involved: 6600, 6660, or even 6666 soldiers are said to have been executed when they refused to obey the emperor Maximian's command to fight against fellow Christians. To punish a whole army in that way is an otherwise unusual Roman practice. Moreover, already Eucherius emphasized that because of the magnitude of this martyrdom he did not know all the names of those involved. This allowed the later tradition to inscribe, as it were, additional martyrs into this legion, thus providing within a glorious and

[3] Which has nothing to do with the Greek town of Thebes, as already Sigebert of Gembloux felt obliged to point out, see *Passio* 1.205–218.

[4] For the various anonymous, slightly different prose versions of this story see n. 7.

[5] Hitherto the year 515 with the foundation of the monastery at Acaunum by St Sigismund was regarded as the beginning of a cult for the Theban legion in that area. But see now, based on recent excavations, new archaeological evidence for earlier Christian cultic activity in: Wermelinger (n. 2), especially the contributions by A. Antonini, *Les origines du monastère Saint-Maurice d'Agaune—un héritage à étudier et protéger*, 331–342, and by G. Descoeudres, *Die Richtstätte der Thebäischen Legion als sekundärer Kultplatz*, 343–358.

[6] For a critical and dismissive evaluation of so-called written evidence before Eucherius, which is essentially worthless, cf. F. Stolle, *Das Martyrium der thebaischen Legion*, Breslau 1891, 28–37.

[7] Still very useful is L. Dupraz, *Les passions de S. Maurice d'Agaune* (Fribourg 1961), but see also more recently D. Woods, 'The origin of the legend of Maurice and the Theban Legion', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994) 385–395, and J.-M. Carrié, 'Des Thébains en Occident? Histoire militaire et hagiographique', in: Wermelinger (n. 2), 9–35.

basically accepted narrative frame Theban saints for a good number of places along the Rhine.

The focus of this investigation will be on a particular branch of the rich literary mutations this story enjoyed through the centuries,[8] viz. the metrical paraphrases of this story. The ones known to me are:

> Venantius Fortunatus (around 530 till after 600; Italy and Gaul), *Carmen* 2.14 *De sanctis Agaunensibus*,[9]
>
> Walafrid Strabo (808–849; Suebia, monastery of Reichenau), *Carmen* 21 *Ymnus de Agaunensibus martyribus*,[10]
>
> *Passio metrica anonyma*, 250 hexameters, perhaps from the 9th or 10th century,[11]
>
> Sigebert of Gembloux (around 1030–1112; Lothringia), *Passio Sanctorum Thebeorum*,[12]
>
> Marbod of Rennes (around 1035–1123; France), *Passio metrica*,[13]
>
> Reiner of Lüttich († around 1182; monastery of St Lorenz), *Passio metrica*.[14]

But in the following we will only take into account Venantius Fortunatus, Walafrid Strabo, and Sigebert of Gembloux,[15] first by comparing them in broader terms and highlighting their common features and differences, also with regard to their prose model, then by looking in more detail at specific characteristics in each of them.

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[8] Most of the texts are from the Early and High Middle Ages, but the story was also a popular theme of religious novels of the 19th century, e.g., W.M. Blackburn, *The Theban Legion: a story of the times of Diocletian*, Philadelphia 1871, and *St Maurice and the Theban Legion. By the author of "Good King Wenceslas" etc.*, London 1873.

[9] Ed. F. Leo, *MGH AA*, Berlin 1881, 42–43.

[10] Ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, Berlin 1884, 367–369.

[11] Ed. J. Huemer, *Mittellateinische Analecten, Jahresbericht des k.k. Staatsgymnasiums in IX. Bezirke in Wien für das Schuljahr 1881/2*, Vienna 1882, 5–11.

[12] Ed. E. Dümmler, *Abh. d. Kgl. Akad. D. Wiss. Berlin, Phil.-hist. Klasse 1*, Berlin 1893, 44–125.

[13] Ed. H. Hagenus, *Carmina medii aevi maximam partem inedita*, Berne 1877, 152–160 and also J. Bernard de Montmélian, S. Maurice et la Légion Thébéenne, Paris 1888, 345–350. Sigebert, *vir.ill.* 158 mentions this poem, but Dümmler (n. 12) 13 emphasizes rightly that the poem by Marbod, a younger contemporary of Sigebert's, was probably written after Sigebert's poem of the martyrdom of the Theban Legion.

[14] Not yet published, cf. Socii Bollandiani (eds), *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis* 2, Brussels 1898–1899, 843, no. 5755.

[15] As these texts may not be that well-known, they are attached in an Appendix, in the case of Venantius and Walafrid the complete versions, in the case of Sigebert an excerpt.

B. *General Comparison*

First of all, even an only superficial scrutiny of the texts in question shows their significant differences in length: Eucherius' prose version covers seven smallish pages in Krusch's edition (n. 1), Venantius Fortunatus' poem comprises thirty verses, Walafrid's 120, and Sigebert's 2896. The literary genre is different in each case: Eucherius writes historical hagiography,[16] Venantius an elegy, Walafrid a hendecasyllabic 'ballad', and Sigebert a hagiographic epic. In each case this will influence the mode and dominant focus of the presentation of the material. In Eucherius a quasi-historical mode prevails which emphasizes the reliability of the witnesses (Eucherius' *Letter to Salvius* p. 40 Krusch *ab idoneis auctoribus rei ipsius veritatem quaesivi*), gives details of time (Euch. *Pass.* 2) and place (ib. 5, a *laus loci*), and tells the story in an ostensibly simple style with a general lack of ornamentation[17] which again has the function of supporting the alleged credibility of the narrative. The elegiac mode allows Venantius an abrupt beginning, a subjective take on the story, and a personalised end. In the tradition of didactic poetry, Walafrid includes a personalised passage as well, also at the end, connecting the poem to its didactic addressee. To enhance the pedagogical impact of his poem he tells the events in dramatic detail. Sigebert writes what one could call a 'full scale' epic,[18] mainly in hexameters, conflating elements of various literary genres: first, personal prologues in a different metre (namely elegiac couplets) before each of the three books and an epilogue, secondly historiographic, antiquarian and other digressions to show himself as a *poeta doctus* in both pagan and Christian knowledge, and thirdly the rich use of biblical material and imagery. By using the largest literary scale (epic) he employs the adequate genre as a means to achieve his aim to give the deed of the Theban Legion *universal* status.

The later writers Venantius and Walafrid assume that their reader is already familiar with the story or at least with its most important facts. This explains in Venantius' case the omission of the martyrs' name with the exception of Mauritius (*carm.* 2.14.5), and in Walafrid the confidence with which this event is declared to give worldwide fame beyond

[16] See the excellent paper by B. Näf on the relation between historiography and hagiography in Wermelinger (n. 2).

[17] I.e. only very few biblical quotations and classical allusions.

[18] For the term and other such epics see Dinkova-Bruun in this volume.

the boundaries of the Swiss Alps, to Gaul at large (*carm.* 21, strophes 1–3, 20–22). In Eucherius the emperor Maximian is named as the main persecutor.[19] Eucherius indulges in irony: this is a death worthy of Maximian, because both he and his death were ignominious. Thus, Eucherius follows in a contrasting or emulating way Lactantius' *De mortibus persecutorum*.[20] The emphasis on the emperor lifts the martyrdom of the Theban Legion onto the national level, turning it, as it were, into a state affair. In Walafrid, it is explicitly mentioned that naming the 'cruel emperor' (*saevus imperator*) who persecuted the Theban Legion would be unworthy (*carm.* 21.7.2 *quem nec carmine nominare dignum*). This is not only a damning *praeteritio* (or *damnatio memoriae*) but also allows a wider application to despicable and wrongdoing rulers in general, which is in Walafrid's didactic interest, as he indirectly refers to contemporary politics. In Sigebert not only the name of Maximian is mentioned, but also in a large digression all the emperors persecuting Christians from Nero up to Diocletian (*Passio* 3.1–197). This demonstrates not only the poet's learnedness and interest in historiographic detail, but universalises the martyrdom of the Theban Legion on a particularly elevated level, as the ultimate persecution and the climax of martyrdom.

A particular interesting and important point of comparison is the function of the imagery of soldierdom and military service in each of

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[19] *Passio* 15 *operae pretium est etiam illud indicare, qui deinde Maximianum trucem tyrannum exitus consecutus sit. cum, dispositis insidiis, genero suo Constantino, tunc regnum tenenti, mortem moliretur, deprehenso dolo eius, apud Massiliam captus nec multo post strangulatus taeterrimoque hoc supplicio adfectus, impiam vitam* ***digna*** *morte finivit.*

[20] Lact. *Mort.* 30.2 and 43.4 says that Constantine forced Maximianus to commit suicide and that he was found hanged in his room (30.5); *Mort.* 30.1 *sic amisso imperatoris ac soceri honore humilitatis impatiens alias rursus insidias machinatus est, quia semel habuit impune.* 2 *vocat filiam Faustam eamque nunc precibus nunc blandimentis sollicitat ad proditionem mariti, alium digniorem virum pollicetur; petit, cubiculum patens relinqui et neglegentius custodiri sinat.* 3 *pollicetur illa facturam et refert protinus ad maritum. componitur scaena qua manifesto facinus teneretur. supponitur quidam vilis eunuchus qui pro imperatore moriatur.* 4 *surgit ille nocte intempesta, videt omnia insidiis opportuna. rari excubitores erant et ii quidem longius; quibus tamen dicit vidisse somnium quod filio suo narrare vellet. ingreditur armatus et spadone obtruncato prosilit gloriabundus ac profitetur quid admiserit.* 5 *repente se ex altera parte Constantinus ostendit cum globo armatorum. profertur e cubiculo cadaver occisi; haeret manifestarius homicida et stupus mutet, quasi "dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes impietatis ac sceleris increpatur. postremo datur ei potestas liberae mortis, ac nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab alta."* 6 *ita ille Romani nominis maximus imperator, qui post longum temporis intervallum cum ingenti gloria viginti annorum vota celebravit, eliso et fracto superbissimo gutture vitam detestabilem* ***turpi et ingeminosa morte*** *finivit*; 43.4 *Maxentius tamquam divi num auxilium libenter amplectitur; iam enim bellum Constantino indixerat quasi necem patris sui vindicaturus*; cf. Krusch (n. 1) p. 38 in his apparatus of parallels, and Stolle (n. 6) 57·

the texts and the significant changes one can observe. In Eucherius, the basic possibility of simultaneously being a soldier, serving the earthly emperor, and a Christian, serving the eternal God, is stated, with reference to Lc 20:25 "Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give God what belongs to God" (*et ait illis: reddite ergo quae Caesaris sunt Caesari et quae Dei sunt Deo*), in *Passio* 3 (*evangelici praecepti etiam sub armis non immemores reddebant quae Dei errant Deo et quae Caesaris Caesari restituebant*). Thus, the strict separation of an individual's life into sacred and secular realms is postulated as a solution. However, the principally possible harmony between being a soldier and being a Christian can turn into a dilemma if a tyrant does not respect the separation of these different realms and claims total control over all aspects of a person's life, precisely in this showing himself to be a tyrant. The arbitrary transgression of boundaries and of limits necessary for human life leads to a dilemma in which solutions can hardly be found by way of agreeable negotiation but only by the destruction of either party—earthly by the destruction of the Theban soldiers, eternally by the destruction of the tyrant.

In Venantius, this line of thinking is taken further by widening the state of being a soldier into the condition of basically every Christian: all Christians have to fight against some sort of enemy (*iniqui*) and will gain eternal salvation if they make the right decisions and have the right priorities. Therefore the persecutors are anonymously called *iniqui*.[21] This generalises, depoliticises, moralizes and even eschatologizes[22] the permanent 'military' battle of all Christians. In Walafrid, the emphasis lies on the heroic, because non-violent, behaviour of the Theban legion facing the threats of the cruel[23] emperor. Such behaviour will gain them great glory and true victory.[24] Thus the Theban legion serves as a worthy Christian example to remain steadfast and faithful

[21] At *carm.* 2.14.1, cf. verse 2 *saeva procella.*

[22] Cf. the strongly eschatological imagery throughout the elegy, viz. 2.14.8 *nomine pro Christi dulcius esse mori*; 11 *ire sub astra*; 15–18 *polos felix exercitus intrans | iunctus apostolicis plaudit honore choris. | cingitur angelico virtus trabeata senatu: | mors fuit unde prius lux fovet inde viros*; 21–24 *caeleste talentum | divitiasque Dei …, | qui faciunt sacrum paradise crescere censum | heredes Domini luce perenne dati*; 25–30 passim.

[23] Expressed by the term *furor* (25.4 of the emperor), contrasted with positive *calor* (4.4. of Mauritius; 17.4 of the entire Theban Legion), and similar expressions to that effect.

[24] Expressed especially by *trophaea* (10.3) and *corona* (9.4; cf. 20.4 *coronans* and 33.4 *coronet*).

to one's convictions.[25] This statement is enhanced by Prudentius' *Peristephanon* 6, used by Walafrid as a hypotext in this hymn,[26] which makes an analogous point when telling of the martyrdom of Fructuosus, the bishop of the Spanish town Tarraco, and the deacons Augurius and Eulogius.[27] New in Walafrid is, also in comparison with other versifications of the martyrdom of the Theban Legion, the explicit application of this message to duke Conrad, the brother of empress Judith, the second wife of Louis the Pious. The story is thus used as a didactic example or role model: if Conrad showed the same constancy as the Theban Legion did, this would guarantee him peace (32.4 *pax*).

In Sigebert, unsurprisingly, the argument is the most differentiated and complex. As he writes grand epic, he is able to dedicate considerable space to telling about the wider historical and political context of the events around the Theban Legion (*Passio* 1.1–308, 399–516), their conversion (1.309–361), their leaders (1.362–398), their interaction with pope Marcellinus in Rome (1.517–602), and their arrival in the Alps (1.645–663). Such a large-scale context aims at establishing the Theban Legion within world history as a major player, guaranteeing a maximum of authority and importance. This is combined with an emphasis of the effect of saintly behaviour on fellow human beings: for instance, in book 1 the leaders of the Theban legion are compared to a crystal absorbing the flames of virtue, and reflecting them back to their fellow soldiers and warming them with the rays of faith (1.374–378 *solis ut admittit flammas ipsasque remitti | cristallus candens, hoc ignem fomite pascens: | sic horum mentes plus cristallo renitentes | flammas admittunt virtutis easque remittent | in sibi subiectos, fidei radiis calefactos*). Exuperius, one of the leaders of the Theban Legion and a titular saint of Gembloux (that is, of course, Sigebert's monastery), makes a similar point in his speech to his soldiers before their imminent second decimation.[28] There he reminds his soldiers (and, as we may infer, the reader in general) that he will mention

[25] This is never said directly in a plump way, as it were, but indirectly advised by hinting at the legion's glory (cf. strophes 1 to 3 and 20 to 21 passim), and by admonishing Conrad to offer faithful service to this army (31.1 *his si servitium fidele cures*).

[26] See for a more detailed comparison K. Pollmann, 'Poetische Paraphrasen der *Passio Acaunensium Martyrum* des Eucherius von Lyon', in: Wermelinger (n. 2), 227–254, here 236–237.

[27] See A.-M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs*, Oxford 1989, 205; M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs. The* Liber Peristephanon *of Prudentius*, Ann Arbor 1993, 110–117.

[28] For the relative scarcity of saints' speeches in hagiographic epic see Müller's contribution in this volume.

before God the merits of this army and request the appropriate award for them (*Passio* 2.696–701), announcing himself as a mediator between human beings and God.[29]

Whereas Venantius was not interested in the number of soldiers in the legion and does not mention this detail at all, both Walafrid and Sigebert chose the super-symbol of perfection, the number 6666[30] (*carm.* 21, strophes 28–29, and *Passio* 3.689–857 respectively), taken not from Eucherius, who mentions 6600 (*Passio* 3), but from a later redaction called X^2.[31] In both poets the figure is used to highlight a specific point, in Walafrid the assured effectiveness of any worshipper's prayer for support to the martyrs of the Theban legion (*carm.* 21, strophe 30), and in Sigebert the sanctity and the quasi-cosmological universalism of this number and therefore this legion (*Passio* 3.689–857 passim). In the case of Venantius the total number of the legion's soldiers is not important, as the emphasis lies on the praise of the relics of the five specific members of this legion that are claimed to be situated in the Cathedral of Tours (*carm.* 2.14.19–20). These relics will, as is implied, support the prayers of pilgrims coming to Tours. So the poem focuses very much on the concrete space that provides a quasi-haptic connection with the relics that in turn provide a link with heaven and eternity. The perspective is *soteriological-eschatological*. In Walafrid's poem the emphasis lies not on any specific relics but on the legion as a whole with their historico-literary fame and glorious example: the focus is here clearly *didactic*, the legion seen as a hagiographic role model (*exemplum*) representing the right values and virtues for *this* life (which will then have a reward in the next as well).

In Sigebert we have the most ambitious and verbose exploitation and enlarging transformation of the Eucherian hypotext: whereas in Venantius and Walafrid the geographical home of the martyrs is defined as Gaul and the Rhone, that is, Acaunum, where their martyrdom took place, in Sigebert the emphasis lies on the Theban origin of the legion which allows for the easier extension of their various places of worship

[29] See K. Pollmann, 'Kontiguität und Eklipse: Zwei Auffassungen von Heiligkeit im hagiographischen Epos der Spätantike', in: Th. Kobusch / M. Erler (eds), *Metaphysik und Religion*, Munich / Leipzig 2002, 611–638, especially 626 f.

[30] The number 6 is the symbol of perfection, cf. H. Meyer / R. Suntrup, *Lexikon der mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen*, Munich 1987, s.v. 'Sechs' and '666'. The multiplication into 66, 666 or even 6666, intensifies the symbolic impact, cf. Walafr. *hymn.* 21.28.3–4 *quam perfectior omnibus figuris, | hoc senarius ordinat decore*; Sig. *Passio* 3.790 *numerus perfectus*.

[31] Vgl. Dupraz (n. 7) 55.

and martyrdom, which are thus not confined to Acaunum alone.[32] The list culminates in Gembloux as a place of pilgrimage where the relics of Exuperius were kept (*Passio* 3.1001–1014). So Sigebert in a way combined the agenda of Venantius and Walafrid, as he intended both the promotion of Gembloux as an attractive place of pilgrimage with an eschatological dimension (as Venantius did for Tours), and the didactic instruction of the reader to take the martyrs as a model for a pious life (as did Walafrid), but giving this intention a much grander scale than Walafrid. The various aims and accentuations in these three poetic paraphrases fit in beautifully with the different genres chosen by the individual authors, which demonstrates a continuous awareness of the sundry functions of the various literary genres as they had been established since antiquity. The classical forms chosen by these authors demonstrate a strong tendency towards conscious literary continuity. In the following, we shall also look for traits of discontinuity and innovation in the different poems.

C. *Individual Aspects*

I. *Venantius Fortunatus*

Venantius chose the literary genre of the elegy to present his poetic paraphrase in order to dress his intention in the right 'poetic mode'. Its subjective-personal focalisation with a lively, partly reflective, partly abrupt style, concentrating on the personal fate of the faithful individual, make this an elegant piece of truly elegiac writing that combines in a sophisticated way the poet's desire for salvation with the equivalent desire of the reader: whereas the poet can achieve it through his poem, the reader has to come to Tours and can then achieve it by using the poem as a devotional or edifying aid. The polished classical style contrasts with the all-permeating eschatological[33] imagery taken from biblical thought. This is reinforced by the choice of bipolar contrasts like hot-cold (verses 3, 4), defeat-victory (verses 5–12), and death-light (verse 18, an antithesis facilitated by the metre and familiar from other

[32] *Passio* 3.922–1000, see 3.994 *per vos, Thebei*, and also 1053, 1054, and 1070, though at suitable moments the Theban Legion can also be addressed as *Agaunenses*, as e.g. at *Passio* 2 proem. 53.

[33] See verses 11, 15–20, 23–28.

elegiac couplets). This antithetical figure of thought, generally a characteristic of Venantius' style, has here the effect that it intensifies the soteriological dimension, that is, the desire and need for eternal salvation, by painting the world in 'black and white': one is either on the winning or on the losing side; therefore one has to make every effort in this life to avoid the latter in the life to come.

The poetic and the soteriological aspects are combined with a personal level, pertaining both to the persona of the author and, implicitly, to the persona of the reader. Due to the fixed conventions of the genre that would be familiar to an educated reader Venantius does not have to make any explicit poetological statements about the function of his poetry: a brief location of its function and *Sitz im Leben* in the last two lines is enough: *Fortunatus enim per fulgida dona Tonantis, | ne tenebris crucier, quaeso feratis opem* (*carm.* 2.14.29–30). His poem, as a particularly elaborate way of praying, requests at the end the saints' help to save the poet (or the reader) from the torments of hell. Thus the focus shifts from the Theban Legion to the poem. Its classical form contrasts with the religious content—but the classical form itself is being transformed into something religious, as well: the poem talking about relics, becomes itself a kind of relic or, rather, assumes the same kind of soteriological power as a relic.[34]

II. *Walafrid Strabo*

The literary genre chosen by Walafrid could be called a didactic ballad that narrates a relatively detailed and dramatic story, devised to hold the attention of the addressee to be instructed, the explicitly named duke Conrad. As he is a socially high standing member of the royal court it is entirely appropriate to use such a famous example as the Theban Legion to advice him in a dignified and suitably indirect manner. Again, at the end we have, as in Venantius, a turn of the poet to his own personal fate, but with a significant change: whereas Venantius prays for salvation through his poem Walafrid claims that the very act of writing this ballad will warrant him the support of the Theban saints to gain God's grace, *carm.* 21, strophe 32 *nam quamvis miser atque criminosus | sim, credo tamen hoc labore parvo | sanctorum meritis*

[34] Analogously, in the pagan tradition elegiac poetry could have the function of bewitching or winning over the object of one's desire, see L. Alfonsi and W. Schmid, 'Elegie', in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 4 (1959) 1026–1061.

diu petitam | Strabonem veniam a deo mereri. Implicitly this means that he understands the very act of writing this advisory poem for Conrad as a worthy deed in itself, which will afford him God's grace. In concrete terms this means presumably two things: (a) that the poem will have (immanent) political success by convincing Conrad, and (b) that it will guarantee Walafrid personal (eschatological) salvation. It is the worthiness of the topic, the Theban martyrs, that warrants success for the poet in this two-fold way. The final strophe of the hymn with its apostrophes to God, where both his more eschatological (*per saecula cuncta*, *salus perennis*) and his more immanent (*gloria*, *potestas*, *virtus una*) dimensions are listed, could be seen as a confirmation of this double aspect of immanence and eschatology.

III. *Sigebert of Gembloux*

Sigebert chose the highest literary genre, epic, more precisely, hagiographic epic (a Christian invention)[35] to tell the story of the Theban martyrdom. The epic characteristics of grandeur and universalism are executed masterfully, both by the various digressions which give the story a universal historical setting, and the elaborate style of description itself. Whereas Walafrid saw the story of the Thebans as a model and applicable to the situation of Conrad as an individual, Sigebert aims at making this a story that affects the whole of humankind, or at least all that come to Gembloux to worship, and that should ideally be the whole of humankind, because, as Sigebert declares, the fame and worship of members of the Theban Legion is spread over several parts of Europe (*Passio* 3.989–1000). Interestingly, whereas Sigebert at the end of his poem first emphasizes the rather traditional intervention of the saints on behalf of the faithful (*Passio* 3.1013–1014 *pro nobis sanctis intervenientibus istis | annuat altitonans, per summa, per infima regnans*), a few lines further he then shifts to his own personal prayer on behalf of the well-being of the monastery of Gembloux (*Passio* 3.1040–1051, especially 1042 *te, precor, asservet*), and finally links his own prayer to Christ for mercy with the simultaneously performed prayer of the Theban martyrs: *Christe, Sigeberti dignare misereri; | orant*[36] *Thebei: miserere, deus, Sige-*

[35] See K. Pollmann, 'Das lateinische Epos in der Spätantike', in: J. Rüpke (ed.), *Von Göttern und Menschen erzählen*, Stuttgart 2001, 93–129, here 96.

[36] Here the indicative (and not the subjunctive!) is used, indicating Sigebert's certitude.

berti (*Passio* 3.1052–1053). This serves as a concrete, personalised exemplification of the power and efficiency of the holy army in intervening constantly and up to Sigebert's day on behalf of the faithful, which has a strongly edifying and intended protreptic effect.

However, using established literary conventions, Sigebert inserts various prologues and an epilogue that enable him to incorporate additional personal and ephemeral, as well as poetological and soteriological statements. For instance, Sigebert relatively frequently belittles his work. He claims that no one is interested in modern literature (*Passio prol.* 1.7–8 *dices: quis leget haec? tua quis nova scripta revolvet? | non esse in pretio scripta moderna scio*). He then emphasizes that his powers are not big enough to cope successfully with the magnitude of the chosen subject (*prol.* 1.19–23), a traditional modesty topos, originally used to allow the poet to avoid the grand genre of epic and use a smaller literary form (like elegy or eclogue), but later also used in epic itself.[37] However, Sigebert can rely on the support (*prol.* 2.56 *veniam*) of the Theban Legion itself, because he himself belongs to it as its last and smallest member (ib. 62 *ultimus ex vestro vel minimus numero*). Facing an overwhelming Christian poetic tradition from Iuvencus through to Heriger of Lobbes, who lived round 1000 (*prol.* 1.91–132), Sigebert will eat the poetic crumbs from the table of his rich predecessors (*prol.* 1.133–136), an elegant theological reply and justification of his own poetic enterprise, following Mt 15:27, where the Sadducean woman asks Jesus to save her daughter despite the fact that she is not an Israelite (*at illa dixit etiam: Domine, nam et catelli edunt de micis quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum*). Finally, he also requests the help of God himself in his poetic ordeal (*prol.* 3.27–32). In the epilogue to the whole epic he combines the assertion of his weak abilities with the request that the Theban martyrs may help this work to blossom.

D. *Conclusions*

In line with the intention of this volume as a whole, the previous remarks are meant to have shown that the versification of a prose model cannot, indeed must not be seen as a mere paraphrase which apart from the metre does not add anything more to the hypotext.

[37] See E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Berne 1953, 410, 460f.

Apart from the fact that such an extreme *l'art pour l'art* in its pointless quasi-school exercise would be difficult to reconcile with the strenuous hardship of such a task, it is in a way unavoidable that the change into a metrical version brings with it also changes of perspective, accentuation, and effect, apart from adding more details and information. Moreover, the change of literary genre opens up new possibilities of modifying the hypotext by using established literary devices to highlight a specific new point that was not obvious, or visible, or intended in the hypotext. The versification of a prose hypotext serves to establish new purposes, like personalisation, political advice or protreptic edification. Another enriching technique, possible with more ease in poetry than in prose, is the metaphorical use of concepts, like the notion of soldierdom as a worldly and an existential religious state. Another striking possibility is the blurring of different levels of focalisation, as Sigebert achieves it with Exuperius' speech. In book 2 Exuperius calls himself an alumnus of peace who will recount the labours and heroic deeds of the Theban legion before God and praise them individually, so that they may be given a reward worthy of their suffering (Sig. *Passio* 2.694–699 *non iam signiferum belli, sed pacis alumnum | cernetis verae pacis vexilla tenere. | coram rege meo vos nomine quenque ciebo, | vestros sudores replicans ibi regis ad aures, | vos singillatim laudabo, notabo viritim, | ut dentur vobis palmaria digna laboris*). Exuperius' self-characterisation can both be referred to the concrete narrative situation of the Theban Legion which is about to be decimated by the Emperor for the second time, and can also be regarded as a promise to pilgrims that Exuperius through his relics at Gembloux continues to be a potent patron for pilgrims.[38]

Finally, as we have seen in the sample texts, the alterations of the hypotext can change in their intensity during the ages. In Sigebert, even more than in Walafrid, several formal aspects reveal the medieval context of his epic: slight prosodic irregularities, the use of Leonine verse, some medieval Latin words, his wide-ranging knowledge and unproblematic parallel use of pagan and Christian sources (although he never mentions any authorities by name other than Christian poets before him); moreover, some facts and images are clearly medieval. Eucherius still had to establish the fame of the Theban Legion in literature and by the means of literature, whereas already in Venantius

[38] See for an analysis in more detail Pollmann (n. 26), 238–241.

this is a fait accompli, a sign that Eucherius's intentions had been successful. Both Walafrid and especially Sigebert emphasize that this fame has now spread further and further, therefore the authority, spirituality and potency of the Theban soldiers as saints have increased during time. For Venantius the relics at Tours are important, as are the relics in Gembloux for Sigebert, although the latter uses far weightier literary devices to advertise this fact. So in these versifications we can observe both continuity and change during their development from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

E. *Appendix*[39]

1. *Venantius Fortunatus, carm. 2.14*[40]

Turbine sub mundi cum persequebantur iniqui
Christicolasque daret saeua procella neci,
frigore depulso succendens corda peregit
rupibus in gelidis feruida bella fides.
quo, pie Maurici, ductor legionis opimae
traxisti fortes subdere colla uiros,
quos positis gladiis armasti dogmate Pauli
nomine pro Christi dulcius esse mori.
pectore belligero poterant qui uincere ferro
inuitant iugulis uulnera cara suis.
hortantes se clade sua sic ire sub astra
alter in alterius caede natauit heros.
adiuuit rapidas Rhodani fons sanguinis undas,
tinxit et Alpinas ira cruenta niues.
tali fine polos felix exercitus intrans
iunctus apostolicis plaudit honore choris.
cingitur angelico uirtus trabeata senatu:
mors fuit unde prius, lux fouet inde uiros.
ecce, triumphantum ductor fortissime, tecum
quattuor hic procerum pignora sancta iacent.
sub luteo tumulo latitat caeleste talentum
diuitiasque Dei uilis arena tegit,
qui faciunt sacrum paradisi crescere censum
heredes Domini luce perenne dati.

[39] For a German translation of these passages see Pollmann (n. 26), 242–254.

[40] Ed. F. Leo, MGH AA (Berlin 1881) 42–43; see also M. Reydellet, *Venance Fortunat. Poèmes Tome 1*, Paris 1994, 70–71, with useful notes.

sidereo chorus iste throno cum carne locandus,
cum ueniet iudex, arbiter orbis erit.
sic pia turba simul, festinans cernere Christum,
ut caelos peteret, de nece fecit iter.
Fortunatus enim per fulgida dona Tonantis,
ne tenebris crucier, quaeso feratis opem.

2. *Walahfridus Strabo, carm. 21*[41]

1 Felix Gallia, fortibus trophaeis,
ubertate soli, virum nitore,
regni nomine purpurata magno
Romanae soror urbis atque consors.
2 Haec, inquam, melius dicata Christi
signis, illita martyrum cruore,
excellentius has togas frequentat,
quas non impius inquietat hostis.
3 Thesauros Rhodani quidem fluento
vallatos colit Alpibus sub ipsis,
sed non sola tenet decus sacratum,
quod toto liquet eminere mundo.
4 Magni Mauritium loquor rigoris,
cum quo Candidus Exsuperiusque,
armorum comitis fidem secuti,
iuverunt ducis optimi calorem.
5 Thebaeae legio beata gentis,
his concredita lege militari,
veri militiam secuta regis
vexillo crucis impetivit hostem.
6 Nullas sontibus intulere caedes,
quin ipsi gladiis deo immolati,
quam terris Orientis imbiberunt
castris occiduis fidem recludunt.
7 Auget crimina saevus imperator,
quem nec carmine nominare dignum,
dum sanctos iubet idolis litare
nolentesque necem subire mandat.
8 Dux primus socios simul coactos
hortatur stabilem tenere mentem:
'Nullus deficiat timore, nemo
perturbetur', ait, 'deum sequamur.
9 Armis iam satis hactenus caducis
hostes stravimus aemulante dextra,

[41] Ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini* vol. 2 (Berlin 1884), 367–369.

nunc virtute animi domandus hostis
maior, maior enim corona restat.
10 Nec dilata diu fatigat ergo
merces stemmatis, ecce laurearum
pugnantes hodie trophaea vosmet,
si vincatis, apud deum manebunt'.
11 Perstant intrepidi, loquuntur ore
uno: 'Praecipe, Caesar, expeditos
pro tutamine publicisque rebus
depugnare viros, oboediemus.
12 At si forte deo cupis relicto
nos servire tuis, profane, divis,
te contemnimus et severitatis
temptamenta tuae minasque viles.
13 Iam nunc rumpe moras, abi satelles,
haec conamina nuntia tyranno,
exurat, perimat licet necetque
limpha fluminis, aut secet lapillis'.
14 Stant inflexibiles manentque fixi,
non dant liba diis genuve ponunt,
rex et conditor est quibus per aevum
Christus, vivere commorique lucrum.
15 Haec postquam ferus impiusque lictor
crudeli domino relata perfert,
commotum scelus ardet in cruentis
statim pectoribus magisque fotum.
16 'Hanc', inquit, 'gravibus notam querelis
mecum vix tulerim, quod ordo nostri
tales officii remandat ausus,
exemplum dabo iam per hos futuris.
17 Miles perge, neca viros protervos,
et primo decimum recide quemque:
sic saltim mea iussa pertimescent'.
His actis calor invenitur idem.
18 Instaurat reus integratque caedem,
in totumque movet gregem machaeram,
certat se pia praevenire turba,
serum quisque sibi putat, quod instat.
19 Caeduntur gladiis, replentur ipsae
valles corporibus, fluuntque rivi
sacri sanguinis, ipse per cruorem
sanctorum Rhodanus sacratus exit.
20 Hinc iam nobilior, suoque maior
excursu, mare cum decore magnum
maiori petit, onme Galliarum
regnum de nece martyrum coronans.
21 O quam nobilis unda, quae beatas

solvens exequias, lavare plagas
et secum meruit sacrata ferre
et se corpora possidere circa.

22 Quae pridem leve nomen indicabant
felicis loca iam placent Agauni,
angustos aditus refulget inter
quod miratur amans quadratus orbis.

23 Postquam carnifices scelus peractum
clauserunt, epulis dedere sese,
inter funera pro dolore luctus
ausi laetitiam sequi iocosam.

24 Ad convivia mente saniori
pervenit stupidis senex medullis
Victor: 'cur geris', inquiens, 'maligna
miles gaudia, stragis in cruore?'

25 'Iussit providus imperator', aiunt,
'omnem militiam deos colendo
complacare sibi, quod haec rebellis
nolens turba luit furore poenas'.

26 Suspirans senior, 'Quid', inquit, 'istam
aetatis seriem miser peregi?
quam vellem, optio si daretur, inter
hos finire pios gravem senectam'.

27 Dicentem rapiunt, senem trucidant,
fit martyr sociusque candidati
coetus, et quibus ante concupivit
iungi, protinus additur maniplis.

28 O summis pia laudibus colenda
sanctorum legio, cruore lota,
quam perfectior omnibus figuris,
hoc senarius ordinat decore.

29 Nam sex milia sexiesque centum,
seni tum decies semelque seni,
dicuntur numero fuisse pleno;
nil sanctos melius potest decere.

30 Tanto munere gaudeamus omnes
qui caeli super astra nos patronos
tot confidimus inclitos habere,
quorum oratio quod petit meretur.

31 His si servitium fidele cures,
o Chonrade, pater mihi colende,
totis viribus exhibere, iugis
te per grandia facta pax sequetur.

32 Nam quamvis miser atque criminosus
sim, credo tamen hoc labore parvo
sanctorum meritis diu petitam
Strabonem veniam a deo mereri.

Sanctae gloria magna trinitati
sit per saecula cuncta, laus, potestas,
virtus una, salus perennis, ipsa
semper nos prece martyrum coronet.
Amen.

3. *Siegbert von Gembloux, Passio Sanctorum Thebeorum 2.651–789*[42]

Speech of the military leader Exuperius to the soldiers of the Theban Legion after their second decimation.

Armatum telis me tollere signa videtis,
Vos, quibus anteibam, vobiscum bella subibam,
Quae vires vobis reparabant, gaudia nobis,
Cum super hanc aquilam, Victoria, stare putabam
Te quatiendo tuas nobis certantibus alas,
Monstrantem palmas nobis pulchrasque coronas.
Haec modo ferre pudet, gestasse diu modo taedet.
Quo mihi Romuleos pro signo ferre maniplos?
Paenitet auratas iovialis et alitis alas
Has gestasse manus, vani monimenta reatus.
Nunquid vera putes, quod bellatrix Iovis ales
Quae spem regnandi regi portenderit ipsi,
Pro Iove bellando, bellanti fulmina dando
Caelo Tytanem deiecit, vel Ganimedem
Unguibus abreptum Iovis asportavit ad usum?
Anne draconiferum me dici rebor honestum?
Me campigenium vocitari sit mihi pulchrum,—
Tanquam militibus pudet ista retexere, virtus
Accrescat genii, virtute mea generati—
Cum bene per campum disponere gestio bellum?
Absint, o comites, absint haec vana, quirites,
Nunc aliis bellis, aliis signis modo, telis
Nunc aliis, aliis utendum viribus, illis
Quos ad regna vocat, quos palma perpete donat
Rex summus Sabaoth, per quem perit ille Behemoth
Tam vehemens, violens, vel Leviathan nimis ingens.
En vexilla crucis sint frontibus ista choruscis
Signa, micant tutis in dextris arma salutis,
Spiritus en gladium donat, patientia scutum,
Multis missilibus nos armat plurima virtus.
His bellate precor, his fidite fortiter hortor,
His nos aereas iam debellasse catervas,

[42] Ed. E. Dümmler, *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Phil.-hist. Klasse 1*, Berlin 1893, 44–125.

His nos nequitiae caelestis diripuisse
Castra recordamur. quid restat? quid remoramur?
Excidit his animis, o pugnax miles, in armis
Esse mori pulchrum? pretium captate laborum
Extremamque manum bellis imponite mecum.
Proiciant vestrae feralia spicula dextrae,
Primus proicio; clipeos deponite, pono.
His pro vexillis mortis vexilla salutis
Sunt gestanda mihi, clauso certamine belli
Cum iam victrices aquilae referentur ad arces.
Hunc Exuperium meliori scemate vestrum
Non iam signiferum belli, sed pacis alumnum
Cernetis verae pacis vexilla tenere.
Coram rege meo vos nomine quenque ciebo,
Vestros sudores replicans ibi regis ad aures,
Vos singillatim laudabo, notabo viritim,
Ut dentur vobis palmaria digna laboris.
Hactenus incentor pugnae fueram, repetitor
Nunc mercedis ero, non vobis, non mihi deero.
Ecce subarrastis caelorum gaudia vobis,
Obsidibusque datis pactum vitae pepigistis.
Quae lux, quae requies, quae gloria, quantaque merces
Obsidibus vestris ibi sit de munere regis,
His, qui tanta dedit nobisque dabit, patefecit
Verbis Mauritii caelis iam mente propinqui.
Invidet hic omnes, ó desperatio, partes
Virtus nostra tibi, quae nescia cedere morti,
Scit sperando mori, non desperando resolvi.
Si gladios gladiis, si scuta repellere scutis
Velletis, dextris, credo, victoria vestris
Annueret laudis titulos braviumque salutis.
Nobiscum dominus virtutum, brachia nudus
Hostis habet carnis, carnis confisus in armis.
Confisus domino, quis erit confusus in ullo?
Scimus Samsonem manibus lacerasse leonem,
Milleque mandibula stravisse viros asinina,
Multos viventem, multo plures morientem
Prostravisse dei fultum virtute potenti.
Vires divinas gemit hibrida nempe Golias,
Dum pueri funda cadit icta superbia summa.
Ligni vermiculus, David rex ipse tenellus,
Ursos informes, catulos, fortesque leones
Exterrere pedo, solitusque necare lacerto,
Bis quadringentos stravit pugnans inimicos.
Accedunt fidei vestraeque spei Machabaei,
Experti rebus, quid possit vivida virtus:
Sic vos non mortem, non formidabitis hostem.

Martyrii si nos nequaquam nomine dignos
Christus censeret, gladios credo removeret
A iugulis nostris, viresque repelleret hostis.
Quod primogeniti Taneos, paterentur et ipsi,
Aut ut per Moysen tunc involvit mare Chencren
Utque Dathan, Abiron, Chore tunc propter Aaron
Deglutivit humus, vivosque recepit Avernus.
Sic nos ulciscens te, Maximiane, dehiscens
Deglutiret humus maris aut sorberet abyssus,
Angelus aut domini, domini gladio scius uti,
Qualis in Assyrios, talis saeviret in istos.
Lucifer et crucifer nobis duo pocula noster
Offert martyrii, tu gratus utrumlibet hauri.
Hoc defecato vino rubet et bene passo,
Hoc madet a minii vitreo dulcore liei.
Sanguine dextra rubet, laeva confessio dulcet,
Iam nobis istud placuit, decoctius illud
Nunc attemptemus, nectar tam dulce probemus.
Hoc omnes abiget curas, hoc me mihi reddet,
Si quid forte dolet penitus, penitus mihi tollet.
Hoc genimen vitis, quod se Christus mera vitis
Dixit nobiscum patris in regno bibiturum.
Cur ego vos onero verborum sirmate? cerno,
Cerno molestari vos, et mea verba gravari.
Est animo cupido pia maturanda cupido:
Rumpite, rumpo moras, patriae curramus ad oras.
Certi curremus, sum certus quo veniemus.
Non sic pugnandum, caedamus ut aera tantum:
Dicite quae dicam, quae dicitis ipseque dicam.
Ex vestris verbis haec auri nuntio regis,
Vosque meis verbis haec auri dicite regis.
Asto quidem miles, Caesar, tuus, asto satelles
Nostri zelotis, quem viribus ambio totis.
Tu longi nobis das donativa laboris,
Ille salutis opem praestat veramque quietem.
Illi debemus latriam: latriam sibi demus,
Et tibi debemus duliam: duliam tibi demus.
Debita, Caesar, habes; cur invideas homo partes
Quas debemus ei, qui torquet sidera caeli;
Qui nos formavit, deformatos reparavit,
Teque velis nolis fecit, qui te quoque donis
Ditaret vitae, si velles credere vitae?
Hoc, Caesar, solo, rex hoc disconvenit uno
Inter nos et te, quod ei supponere recte
Te non horremus, nec thura diis adolemus,
In sanctisque deum non persequimur, sed amamus.
Non hanc ex animis radicem vellere nostris

Mortis formido poterit vitaeve cupido.
Nostra tuae legis sunt subdita corpora paenis:
Nunc debachator, grassator, et exagitator
In nos tormentis, furias simul exige mentis,
Dissice, dilapida, lacera, dissolve, trucida.
Hoc canis atque lupus poterit, leo, tygris et ursus.
Nobis horrores hi vilent atque dolores,
His iocundamur, gaudemus, si patiamur.
Devotos cernes morti, sternemur inermes.
Dat Paulus nobis oblivia grata doloris,
Nos animans veris ad amanda perennia verbis:
'Mundi condignae non sunt existimo paenae
Ad spem, quam verae supplebit gloria vitae'.

BIBLICAL VERSIFICATIONS FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY: HISTORY OR ALLEGORY?[1]

G. Dinkova-Bruun

It is no exaggeration to say that the Bible was the main source of inspiration for writers and poets, teachers and theologians, artists and artisans throughout the Middle Ages. The Old and the New Testament were glossed, commented upon, retold, versified, and translated into the vernacular languages. Stories from the Bible were included in the daily liturgy and depicted on the walls of monasteries and churches for the spiritual benefit of both monks and lay people. The meaning of human history and the whole understanding of the world were shaped by the biblical narrative, which was every Christian's guide to salvation and the only path that could lead the believer closer to God. The Bible was, in a word, the umbrella under which medieval people worked and worshipped, wrote and built, lived and died. It was the one book that gave meaning to everything—past, present and future.

This article will focus on one area of biblically-inspired literary activity in the Middle Ages, a field that was once fertile and important but has remained on the periphery of scholarly inquiry: the versification of the Bible. The main emphasis of this study is on biblical versifications written from the early twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century, but it also includes a brief prehistory of the genre during Late Antiquity, the Carolingian period, and the eleventh century. Due to the abundance of biblical poetry, some limits to this study are necessary. I will examine a poetical corpus that comprises Latin biblical versifications written in either hexameters or elegiac couplets, which either tell a story based on a biblical narrative or versify a biblical book that may or may not contain a narrative account. Indeed, many biblical books treated by medieval versifiers are clearly non-narrative: some examples are the Song of Songs, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Minor Prophets. The term 'biblical versification', therefore, indicates a poetic compo-

[1] I would like to thank Professor A.G. Rigg and Ms. Anna Burko for their useful comments on a draft of this paper.

sition that versifies any text of the Bible, whether narrative or non-narrative; thus it is a much broader term than 'biblical epic', which is often used in scholarly literature and which might at first seem identical.

As a result of the limitations set above, this survey will not examine in detail personification allegories such as Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, Theodulus' *Ecloga*, Warnerius' *Synodus* or the anonymous *Eupolemius*. Also, most hymns and other devotional poetry, as well as poems which are composed in rhythmical verse, remain outside our consideration. This division between metrical and rhythmical verse may seem thematically artificial—after all both types of poetry deal with biblical material—but in the case of the metrical versifications of the Bible there is a clear tension between the intentions of a poet and the demands imposed upon him by the classical epic genre (one thinks of Virgil here, whose influence was undiminished throughout the Middle Ages). This tension, which does not exist in rhythmical poetry, is worth exploring. To what extent does medieval biblical versification pertain to the epic genre, and is this at all a term that we can apply to the biblical compositions of the poets in the later Middle Ages? How do literary trends and fashions develop in the course of the one thousand years under scrutiny here? Which themes appear to be the most popular among the poets? These are the main questions which I will try to answer in the following pages. I will start, however, with some words on terminology.

I. *Definitions*

The poems of Juvencus, Sedulius, Ps.-Cyprian, Arator, and Avitus, have been called by previous scholars 'biblical epics', a term that connects them directly with classical epic. In addition, many scholars explain the origin of the late antique biblical epics by the so-called 'paraphrastic theory', which was advanced by Curtius in his book *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. According to Curtius, the late antique poets, who undoubtedly had a traditional classical education, composed their poems following the rules of the *paraphrasis*, a rhetorical exercise practiced in the schools of the ancient grammar teachers. This theory has won general acceptance among scholars.[2]

[2] E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Bollingen Series 36), Princeton 1953, 7th repr., Princeton 1990, 147–148. Most recently

The term 'biblical epic' might be acceptable for the poets of Late Antiquity, but it is both confusing and limiting when the production of the later medieval versifiers is concerned. It is confusing, because the typical characteristics of the epic genre are sometimes difficult to find in the poems of the later periods.[3] For instance, many of the later poets chose to write in elegiac couplets, which certainly would have been considered rather unorthodox in classical times. The term is also limiting, because the versifications of the non-narrative books of the Bible, as well as the biblical verse commentaries, remain outside its parameters. As a result, although I retain the term 'biblical epic' when dealing with Late Antiquity and Carolingian times, I avoid it for the twelfth- and thirteenth-century biblical poets, calling their works more appropriately 'biblical versifications'. At the same time, I retain throughout two terms employed by scholars of late antique biblical poetry, namely, 'full-scale' biblical versification and 'secondary biblical paraphrase', which are also useful for describing some of the poetic phenomena in the later Middle Ages.[4]

Finally, we have to be aware of the differences in the various historical periods. In Late Antiquity the poets strove to reproduce the biblical narrative in a poetic form and through poetic means that were known to and loved by their educated contemporaries. Their aim was to present the story of the Bible—the true story of human creation and redemption—in the most attractive form possible; they wrote in order to promote the new Christian religion and oppose paganism on an intellectual level and within a society of which they themselves were

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the theory has found an ardent supporter in Michael Roberts who argues its validity in his book *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity*, Liverpool 1985. Among the few dissenting voices are Reinhart Herzog, who prefers to approach the biblical epic of Late Antiquity as an independent poetic genre with its own tradition and aesthetic (see R. Herzog, *Die Bibelepik der lateinische Spätantike: Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung*, München 1975, 65–67), and Carl Springer, who considers the biblical epic a genre developed from the ecclesiastical tradition of biblical interpretation (see C. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: The Paschale Carmen of Sedulius*, Leiden 1988, 13–14).

[3] The definition of epic is too large an issue to address thoroughly here; see for instance K. Thraede, 'Epos', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5, Stuttgart 1962, 983–1043; J.-L. Charlet, 'L'inspiration et la forme bibliques dans la poésie chrétienne du IIIe au VIe siècle', in J. Fontaine et Ch. Pietri (eds), *Le monde latin antique et la Bible*, Paris 1985, 613–643; and P.-A. Deproost, 'L'épopée biblique en langue latine. Essai de définition d'un genre littéraire', *Latomus* 56 (1997) 14–39.

[4] These terms are from Roberts (n. 2), 104–105, who of course talks about 'full-scale biblical epics'.

part. The context changed fundamentally in the later periods, when the biblical poets were members of a basically Christian society. Their role as frontrunners of Christian faith had changed. They had become compilers of biblical scholarship and educators, writing to help teachers and students remember both the biblical story and its deeper allegorical meaning. In the sixth century Arator stood on the steps of San Pietro in Vinculis reading his verse *Acts of the Apostles* to a public still imbued by classical pagan literature. In the thirteenth century this was no longer the case.

II. *Late Antiquity*

The corpus of late antique biblical narrative poetry comprises three distinct groups. The most important is represented by the so-called 'full-scale biblical epics', among which some are based on the New Testament—for example, Juvencus' *Evangeliorum libri IV*, Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*, Arator's *De Actibus Apostolorum*, and Severus Episcopus' *In evangelia libri XII*[5]—while others are inspired by the Old Testament: Pseudo-Cyprianus' *Heptateuchos*, Claudius Marius Victorius' *Alethia*, and Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus' *De spiritalis historiae gestis*.[6] To these poems must be added the original and daring *Cento Vergilianus* by Proba.[7]

The second group comprises poems that can be described more accurately as biblical *carmina*. They need to be mentioned here because they show narrative elements and are certainly biblical versifications. But they are definitely not epics: on grounds of length alone they are ruled out. Examples are *Laus Sancti Iohannis* or *Carmen sextum* of Paulinus of Nola, the anonymous *De Sodoma* and *De Iona*, and the three Pseudo-

[5] Juvencus, *Evangeliorum Libri IV*, ed. J. Hümer, CSEL 24, Vienna 1891; Sedulius, *Carmen Paschale*, ed. J. Hümer, CSEL 10, Vienna 1885, 1–146; Arator, *De Actibus Apostolorum*, ed. A.P. McKinlay, CSEL 72, Vienna 1951; and *Severi Episcopi 'Malacitani?' in Evangelia libri XII: Das Trierer Fragment der Bücher VIII–X*, ed. Otto Zwierlein, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Abhandlungen (1994), Neue Folge Heft 109.

[6] Ps.-Cyprianus, *Heptateuchos*, ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23, Vienna 1891, 1–208; Victorius, *Alethia*, ed. P.F. Hovingh, CCL 128, Turnhout 1960, 125–193; and Avitus, *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, ed. R. Peiper, MHG AA 6.2, Berlin 1883, 203–294.

[7] Proba, *Cento Vergilianus*, ed. C. Schenkl, CSEL 16.1, Vienna 1888, 569–609. See also E. Clark and D. Hatch, *The Golden Bough, The Oaken Cross: The Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba*, Ann Arbor 1981.

Hilarian works *Metrum in Genesim, Carmen de martyrio Maccabaeorum* and *De evangelio*.[8] These poems are quite short, from 100 to 400 verses.

The third group in the late antique corpus consists of the *Psychomachia* by Aurelius Prudentius and the *De laudibus Dei* by Blossius Aemilius Dracontius,[9] which are perfect examples of the so-called 'secondary paraphrase', i.e. a biblical narrative contained in a work of largely non-biblical character. They are not the main concern here, and are included in the discussion only as points of comparison with the representatives of the first two groups.

Scholars have traditionally divided the late antique epics into 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' poems.[10] This classification, even though useful, is also misleading, as it suggests that every poet versified the whole text or parts of the text of strictly one of the Testaments. While this is true in most cases, there are two significant exceptions: Avitus and Sedulius. Avitus is generally called an 'Old Testament' poet, even though the last eighteen verses of his *De spiritalis historiae gestis* clearly talk about the salvation of man through baptism; many other passages of the poem also refer to the New Testament. On the other hand, Sedulius is labelled a 'New Testament' poet despite the fact that the first book of his *Paschale Carmen* retells eighteen miraculous stories from the Old Testament.[11] In addition, the traditional division into 'Old and New Testament' poems leaves the short biblical *carmina* completely out of consideration.

These are two serious deficiencies in the old classification. I would like to propose a new way of organizing the material, which brings out the intellectual pursuits of the poets more clearly. The compositions of Juvencus and Ps.-Cyprian follow the biblical narrative closely, but other

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[8] Paulinus of Nola, *Laus Sancti Iohannis*, ed. W. Hartel, CSEL 30, Vienna 1894, 7–18. Anonymous, *De Sodoma* and *De Iona*, ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23, Vienna 1891, 212–226; a critical edition of the poem *De Sodoma*, with an Italian translation and annotation, was published by Luca Morisi in his book *Versus de Sodoma*, Bologna 1993. Ps.-Hilarius, *Metrum in Genesim ad Leonem papam, Carmen de martyrio Maccabaeorum*, and *De evangelio*, ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23, Vienna 1891, 231–274.

[9] Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, ed. J. Bergman, CSEL 61, Vienna 1921, 167–211; ed. M.P. Cunningham, CCL 126, Turnhout 1966, 149–181. See also Dracontius. *De Laudibus Dei*, ed. F. Vollmer, MGH AA 14, Berlin 1905, 23–113. A very good edition, with notes and introduction, is published by Cl. Moussy and C. Camus, *Blossius Aemilius Dracontius. Oeuvres* (Paris 1985), 4 vols.

[10] See Roberts (n. 2).

[11] The only notable exception is Springer, who prefers to call the *Paschale Carmen* 'Life of Christ' (n. 2), 53–64.

poets are more adventurous in their treatment, rearranging the biblical material according to meaning.

Christianity is founded on the belief that with the incarnation of Christ the Messianic prophecies have come true. Christ's life, death, and resurrection represent the fulfillment of the promises made in the Old Testament. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why the Fall of Man gradually becomes so significant for Christian doctrine. Without the Fall there can be no Redemption. This is how the typological connection between the sin of Adam and the sacrifice of Christ was created. When reading the late antique biblical poems, one gets the impression that, while writing their compositions, the poets did not think of which Testament they were versifying, but of how better to convey to their audience the most important Christian doctrines about creation, original sin and its punishment by God, Christ's incarnation and death, and finally man's salvation through baptism.

The real division seems to be not between 'Old and New Testament' poets, but between poets who deal with the 'Fall of Man', the Fall having a larger meaning here, incorporating the notions of creation, original sin and God's punishment, and poets who deal with the 'Redemption of Man', Redemption meaning both the death of Christ and the salvation of man.[12] By organizing the corpus of late antique biblical poetry according to these two themes, all poems, even the short *carmina* and Proba's *Cento*, find their place. The *Alethia* by Victorius, Ps.-Cyprian's *Heptateuchos*, and the anonymous *De Sodoma* deal with the 'Fall of Man'. Juvencus' *Evangeliorum libri IV*, Paulinus of Nola's *Laus Sancti Iohannis*, Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*, Ps.-Hilary's *De evangelio*, Arator's *De Actibus Apostolorum*, the anonymous *De Iona*, and, Severus Episcopus' *In evangelia libri XII* focus on the 'Redemption of Man'. Proba's *Cento Vergilianus*, Ps.-Hilary's *Metrum in Genesim*, Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, and Avitus' *De spiritalis historiae gestis* combine both themes.

Interestingly, the intriguing *Carmen de martyrio Maccabaeorum* of Ps.-Hilary does not fit into this division and is altogether very unusual. First, it is the only late antique poetic composition dealing with the Maccabean story, a situation that will change in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; second, the poem is rather a drama than epic. It is a dialogue between King Antioch and a brave mother who prepares each

[12] On the Christian interpretations of the 'Fall of Man' and the response of the Christian poets to them, see the survey by J.M. Evans in his book *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*, Oxford 1968.

of her seven sons for their coming death. The whole poem seems to be a dramatization of a single biblical verse–2 Macc. 7:20.

Finally, the *Tituli historiarum* by Prudentius and *Tristica* by Helpidius should be mentioned. Even though they remain outside the main corpus of biblical epics,[13] they are important, because they are examples of the biblical epigrammatic genre that found its continuation in the medieval verse *tituli* and various *versus memoriales*, as well as in the influential biblical epigrams of Hildebert.

III. *The Carolingian Period*

Things look rather different for the Carolingian period, but of course the whole political and cultural climate had changed as well.[14] In poetry the new tendencies consist of a growing interest in rhythmical verse and the appearance of the first important poetic compositions in the vernacular languages, especially in Old English and Old High German.

The corpus of Latin biblical versification dating from Late Antiquity has been divided into 'full-scale' biblical epics, *carmina*, and 'secondary paraphrases', epics comprising the largest group. If we apply the same division to the Carolingian biblical poetry, two things become apparent immediately. First, the corpus of biblical versifications contains far fewer items, and second, the 'full scale biblical epics' are represented by just one example: Odo of Cluny's *Occupatio*, written in the tenth century.[15] The number of biblical *carmina* is also limited. On the one hand, our examples include the few biblically-inspired poems of Florus of Lyons;[16] and on the other, the two ninth-century metrical renditions

[13] Prudentius, *Tituli Historiarum* (or *Dittochaeon*), ed. M.P. Cunningham, CCL 126, Turnhout 1966, 390–400; and Rusticus Helpidius. *Tristica*, ed. Fr. Corsaro, *Elpidio Rustico*, Catania 1955, 122–129. Helpidius also wrote another poem entitled *Carmen de Christi Iesu beneficiis* (148 hexameters), again edited by Corsaro, 130–139. It is not included in the corpus because it exhibits no narrative elements. The *Tristica* depict 24 short scenes from the Old and the New Testament, divided in the following way: the first 16 episodes are joined in pairs by symbolic meaning (i.e. Joseph sold by his brothers and Christ sold by Judas, the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of Christ); the last 8 episodes, on the other hand, are inspired exclusively by the New Testament (i.e. Martha and Maria, the changing of the water into vine, the resurrection of Lazarus, etc.).

[14] The best study of biblical poetry in the Carolingian period is Francesco Stella's *La poesia carolingia latina a tema biblico*, Spoleto 1993.

[15] *Odonis abbatis cluniacensis Occupatio*, ed. Antonius Swoboda, Leipzig: Teubner, 1900.

[16] Florus of Lyons, *Carmina*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH PLAC 2, Berlin 1884, 509–

of the Psalms, one anonymous comprising 1885 hexameters and one by Acbrannus, of whose versification only a short fragment is preserved.[17]

In the group of so-called 'secondary paraphrases' the best examples are Theodulfus' *Consolatio de obitu cuiusdam fratris*, Milo of Saint Amand's *De sobrietate*, Agius' *Epicedium Hathumodae* and Ermoldus Nigellus' *In honorem Hludowici libri IV*.[18] In these works two important tendencies can be seen: Theodulfus, Milo, and Agius use the different biblical personages as moral examples very much in the tradition of Venantius Fortunatus[19] and Prudentius; Ermoldus incorporates figurative verses inspired by the biblical narrative in a typical biblical ekphrasis.

Scholars have noted the reduction in 'full-scale' biblical versifications during Carolingian times, but there is no completely satisfactory explanation for this development. The standard answers are, first, that the Carolingian poets felt there was nothing they could add to the already canonized corpus of late antique biblical epics, and, second, that they had different literary interests.[20] Without denying the possible validity of these explanations, I would like to propose a new one.

As already discussed, all literary historians, with the exception of Carl Springer, call the *Carmen Paschale* by Sedulius a 'New Testament poem'. We have seen how imprecise this term can be and how important it is to discover what the narrative subject of Sedulius really was. Unlike his predecessor Juvencus, who versified more or less the whole text of the Gospels, Sedulius selected episodes from both the Old and the New Testament in order to describe in verse the life and miracles of Christ. Sedulius' work, together with *De vita Martini* by Paulinus of Périgueux, had a great impact on the Carolingian poets,[21]

539, especially *In evangelium Matthaei*, *Gesta Christi Domini*, *In evangelium Iohannis*, *Oratio cum commemoratione antiquorum miraculorum Christi Dei nostri*, and *Epigramma hymni Ananiae, Azariae, Mishaelis sanctorum trium puerorum*.

[17] P. Stotz, 'Zwei unbekannte metrische Psalmenparaphrasen', in C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (eds), *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, Firenze, 2005, 239–257. Peter Orth is preparing a critical edition of these two poems for MGH PLAC 6, 2.

[18] Theodulfus, *Consolatio de obitu cuiusdam fratris*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH PLAC 1, Berlin 1880, 477–480; Milo of Saint Amand, *De sobrietate*, ed. L. Traube, MGH PLAC 3, Berlin 1896, 615–675; Agius, *Epicedium Hathumodae*, ed. L. Traube, MGH PLAC 3, Berlin 1896, 372–388 (the biblical part is verses 225–336); and Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici libri IV*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH PLAC 2, Berlin 1884, 5–79. For more examples see Stella (n. 14), 446–453.

[19] Venantius Fortunatus, *Carminum Liber Nonus. Carmen II: Carmen Ad Chilpericum et Fredegundem reginam*, ed. F. Leo, MGH AA 4, Berlin 1881, 205–209.

[20] See Stella (n. 14), 13–14.

[21] Paulinus' poem is a versification of the prose life of St. Martin by Sulpicius

who followed their example in their own verse lives of various saints. As a result, the content of the epic genre changed from biblical to hagiographical, but the genre as a whole did not disappear. It is true that there is discontinuity in subject matter of the epic genre, but there is continuity in the epic tradition. By following the example of Christ, each saint becomes a holy figure in life and an epic hero in poetry.

An interesting phenomenon of the period, and one that deserves special attention, is the appearance of a new poetic genre, the *versus de bibliotheca*, which represents a metrical introduction to the Bible. This is related to the remarkable increase, in this period, in study of the text of the Bible. Scholars such as Alcuin and Theodulf dedicated their efforts to establishing the precise number of canonical biblical books, as well as to determining the order in which they had to be copied. The examples of *versus de bibliotheca* are numerous; many Carolingian poets, including Alcuin and Theodulf, wrote them.[22] Indeed, their verse prefaces were composed for particular biblical codices. Thus, we find in each of the *versus de bibliotheca*, first, a summary outlining the order and number of the biblical books in the codex; second, a general eulogy of sacred Scripture; and last, an address to the reader. Even though this structure is generally followed by the poets, their ways of presenting the biblical material vary. Alcuin, for example, chooses to introduce each biblical book by its most famous characters, whereas Theodulf enumerates the books of the Bible with a brief summary of their contents. The Carolingian *versus de bibliotheca* was very influential in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and we will return to it when discussing the poetic output of these later centuries.

The final point to be made about the Carolingian period was that it was a time of poetic experimentation. The use of rhythmical poetry spread;[23] there was a clear interest in imitating the classical poets; secular poetry blossomed; and biblical poetry showed in general a ten-

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Severus. It contains 3622 unrhymed hexameters, divided into six books. It is edited by M. Petschenig in *Poetae Christiani minores*, CSEL 16, Vienna 1888, 17–159.

[22] Alcuinus, *Carmen* LXIX, and Theodulfus, *Praefatio Bibliothecae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH PLAC 1, Berlin 1880, 288–292 and 532–538.

[23] Some examples illustrating this new development are the anonymous *Versus de Iudit et Olofernum*, *Versus de Iacob et Ioseph*, *De natiuitate Christi*, *De passione et resurrectione Domini*, *De diuite et paupere Lazaro*, and poem LVIII which tells the story of Judith. All these poems are edited by K. Strecker in MGH PLAC 4, Berlin 1923, 459–491.

dency to fragment and to produce unusual poetic forms such as the *Ecloga* by Theodulus[24] and the biblical parody *Cena Cypriani* by John the Deacon.[25] There is hardly any doubt that these two works are among the most original biblical poetic compositions of the period. The *Ecloga* was very influential in the centuries to follow, while the *Cena* is unforgettable with its string of puns related to various biblical characters. It describes a banquet at which all the major biblical personages are present. After a short prologue, the narrative begins with the seating arrangements (Noah sits on an ark, Isaac on an altar, Abraham under a tree, Moses on stones, the Pharaoh on sand, Susanna in a garden, Absalom among branches, Samson on pillars, and so on);[26] then we are told what each of the guests is served for dinner (for example, Eve is offered figs, Noah olives, the Pharaoh watermelons) and what presents are given to them by their royal host (Aaron gets a multicoloured robe, Eve a leafy one; Lazarus receives clothes made of linen, John of camel hide; Jonas is dressed in blue, Rahab in scarlet, Abel in purple). And so the witty *Cena* continues, presenting further details borrowed from Scripture and closely associated with each of the characters, who by the end of the poem are engraved in the reader's mind as amusing and slightly grotesque cameos.

IV. *The Eleventh Century*

During the eleventh century, interest in writing biblical poetic works with a larger scope than a mere *carmen* began to increase again. With their compositions, the eleventh-century poets prepared the ground for the huge wave of biblical versifications that appeared in the following centuries. Unfortunately, despite their undeniable importance, few of

[24] Theodulus, *Ecloga*, ed. J. Osternacher, Urfahr 1901–1902. A new edition was published in 1997: *Theodulo Ecloga: il canto della verità e della menzogna*, ed. F. Mosetti Casaretto, Firenze 1997.

[25] Iohannes Diaconus, *Cena Cypriani*, ed. P. von Winterfeld, MGH PLAC 4, Berlin 1899, 870–900. Even though this poem is rhythmical, its treatment of the biblical text is so unusual that it deserves a mention in this survey.

[26] A few lines will serve as an example here (vv. 16–19):

Super arcam sedit Noe, Iafet super laterem,
Isaac super altare, Abraham sub arbore.
Iacob sedit super petram et Loth secus hostium,
Moyses super lapillos, Helias in pellibus.

these poets have been studied by modern scholars,[27] and this accounts for the false impression that there is a break in the tradition of Latin biblical poetry between the Carolingian period and the early twelfth century.

The larger biblical poems of the eleventh century exhibit three different approaches to the biblical narrative. Such works as the anonymous poem *De conditione mundi*, written in the early eleventh century in Bavaria, the *De nuptiis Christi et Ecclesiae* by Fulcoius of Beauvais, and the *Planctus Euae* by Henry of Augsburg represent ambitious versifications that deal with the traditional Fall-Redemption theme.[28]

The verse commentary on the *Cantica Canticorum* by Williram of Ebersberg[29] and the anonymous verse commentary on the Psalms from Tours[30] represent a new trend in the genre of biblical versification, namely, the rendering in poetic form of a systematic commentary on a specific book of the Bible. Williram's poem, based on Haymo's *Enarratio in Cantica Canticorum*, and the Tours commentary are the first examples of this approach; many more poets followed suit in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.

The third approach is exemplified by two anonymous poems, the *Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii Dauid filii Abraham*[31] and the *Liber prefigurationum Christi et Ecclesie*.[32] The composition and contents of both

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[27] For some exceptions see M.W. Herren, C.J. McDonough, R.G. Arthur (eds), *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Medieval Latin Studies, Cambridge 9–12 1998* (Publications of The Journal of Medieval Latin 5), Turnhout 2002, 2 vols.

[28] F. Stella, 'Un inedito sommario biblico in versi: il *De conditione mundi*', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser. 32 (1991), 445–469; M.I.J. Rousseau (ed.), *Fulcoii Belvacensis Vtriusque De nuptiis Christi et Ecclesiae Libri septem*, Washington 1960; and Heinricus of Augsburg, *Planctus Euae*, partially edited (the first 555 verses) by J. Hümer in 'Jahresbericht des K.K. Staatsgymnasiums im zweiten Bezirk', Vienna 1891, and fully edited with an introduction by M. Colker, 'Heinrici Augustensis *Planctus Evae*', *Traditio* 12 (1956), 149–226.

[29] Williram of Ebersberg, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*, ed. A. Beaugendre, *Hildeberti primo Cenomanensis episcopi opera tam edita quam inedita. Acceserunt Marbodi Redonensis episcopi opuscula*, Paris 1708.

[30] *Incipit*: "Nimirum Christo saluandorum duce lucro." An edition of the poem, written between 1084 and 1096, is in preparation by Peter Orth.

[31] See *'De generatione Christi': Ein typologisches Lehrgedicht des hohen Mittelalters (Inc. Prima luce deum)*, ed. M. Rödel (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 15: Klassische Sprachen und Literaturen 79), Frankfurt 1999. See also the partial edition with extensive commentary in *The Ancestry of Jesus. Excerpts from 'Liber Generationis Iesu Christi Filii Dauid Filii Abraham' (Matthew 1:1–17)*, ed. G. Dinkova-Bruun (Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 28), Toronto 2005.

[32] Excerpts from the poem are printed in J.B. Pitra, *Spicilegium Solesmense complectens*

these poems make them very suitable for introducing a student to the basic principles of medieval exegesis. For example, the *Liber generationis* presents each of Jesus' ancestors three times—*historialiter*, *moraliter*, and *spiritualiter*, whereas the *Liber prefigurationum* proposes to reveal the thousand ways in which the Old Testament prefigures the incarnation of Christ. This trend towards writing biblical exegesis in verse became very popular and was developed even further in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.

If, as we have seen, the corpus of more substantial biblical compositions in the period was small (seven poems altogether), so was also the number of the shorter biblical *carmina*; the only examples of the latter are works by the already mentioned Williram of Ebersberg and Fulcoius of Beauvais, which amount to seven compositions.

Williram's *carmina* explain and comment upon different scriptural passages, as seen in *Quomodo Dauid ceperit Hierusalem ciuitatem Iebusei* (2 Kings 5:5–9), *De eo quod mensus est Dauid duos funicolos* (2 Kings 8:2), *De adiectione quindecim annorum Ezechiae regi* (4 Kings 20:6), and *De amphora in Zacharia propheta* (Zach. 5:6–11).[33] Williram's short poems prove again that the eleventh century was the starting point for many of the poetic developments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: on the one hand, his detached fragments of biblical commentary were only the first steps in the long process of creative writing that culminated in Peter Riga's *Aurora*; on the other hand, *versus memoriales* very similar to Williram's were written continuously until well into the fifteenth century.

Fulcoius' approach is different. His biblical poems are in the form of moralizing verse letters to friends or officials.[34] Many of these letters contain biblical allusions, but three of them deal almost entirely with biblical events. For example, Fulcoius' letter 9 is addressed to an adulterous friend, whose virtue the poet is trying to strengthen by telling him the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife; letter 10, written in sup-

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Sanctorum Ecclesiaticorum Anecdota hactenus opera selecta e graecis orientalibusque et latinis codicibus, Paris 1855, vols. 2–3 (passim). See also F. Dolbeau, 'Un poème médiolatin sur l'Ancien Testament: le Liber prefigurationum Christi et ecclesie', in J.-M. Auwers et A. Wénin (eds), *Lectures et relectures de la Bible. Festschrift P.-M. Bogaert*, (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, CXLIV), Leuven 1999, 367–391. Edition of the entire composition, by G. Dinkova-Bruun, is forthcoming in the Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis.

[33] M. Dittrich, 'Sechzehn lateinische Gedichte Willirams von Ebersberg', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 76 (1939), 45–63.

[34] M. Colker, 'Fulcoii Belovacensis Epistulae', *Traditio* 10 (1954), 191–273, esp. 230–246 (letters 9, 10, and 11).

port of priestly marriage and against shameful lust, provides biblical examples of how impossible it is for a man to withstand the womanly charms, citing Zorobabel, Moses, David, and Ammon; letter 11 compares William the Conqueror with both Jephthah and his daughter. It is important to mention also that Fulcoius is among the few biblical poets who successfully combine scripture and classical learning; Lawrence of Durham in the twelfth century was another one.

Finally, three original poetic works should be mentioned even though they stand apart from the main stream of biblical versification. The first is the *Delicie cleri* by the French monk Arnulfus, written in 1054–1056 and dedicated to the Emperor Henry III and his wife Agnes.[35] The poet uses as a model the Old Testament books attributed to King Solomon, but he does not really versify them. His work is a dialogue between a wise father and his inexperienced son, divided into twelve parts; it thus falls into the genre of *Speculum principum*, of which we have numerous prose examples but not many poetic ones.[36] The other two unusual compositions of this period are the *Eupolemius*, an allegorical epic of the cosmic struggle between God and Satan, called Agatus and Cacus, and Warnerius' *Synodus*, a heated debate between Thlepsis (the Old Testament) and Neocosmos (the New Testament), from which neither emerges victorious.[37] Both the *Eupolemius* and the *Synodus* were written by German authors in the tradition of Prudentius and Theodulus, and, as stated in the introduction, do not belong to the genre of biblical versification.

[35] J. Hümer, 'Zur Geschichte der mittellateinischen Dichtung: *Arnulfi delicie cleri*', *Romanische Forschungen* 2 (1886), 211–246.

[36] There are no other medieval example in Latin verse. In the fifteenth century Thomas Hoccleve wrote in Middle English a verse mirror for Henry V called *De regimine principum*; see *Hoccleve's works: The regement of princes and fourteen minor poems*, ed. F. Furnivall (Early English Text Society Publications Extra Series, no. 72), New York 1897, repr. 1975.

[37] J.M. Ziolkowski, 'Eupolemius', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991), 1–45 for additional bibliography on the poem and its translation into English; and P.-W. Hoogterp, 'Warnerii Basiliensis Paraclitus et Synodus', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 8 (1933), 261–433, esp. 364–429.

V. *The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries—handlist of biblical versifications*

The corpus of biblical versification in this period comprises six different types of composition:

1. "Full scale" biblical versifications—poems that versify a large number of biblical books and are relatively long.
2. Biblical *carmina*—versifications of one biblical book or of a separate biblical motif.
3. Hexaemeral poems—poems which have as a central theme the story of Creation.
4. Secondary biblical paraphrases—biblical versifications contained in poems of largely non-biblical character.
5. Biblical verse *tituli*—compilations of short poems on different biblical topics.
6. Anomalous cases—biblical poems, but not biblical versifications.

I shall not give much information about poems that can be consulted in easily accessible editions or reference books and are generally well known, but shall provide greater detail about the unedited poems and those either difficult to find or very little studied.

THE CORPUS

1. *'Full-scale' biblical versifications*

1. Adam of Barking, *De serie sex etatum*, not edited.[38]
2. Alexander of Ashby, *Breuissima comprehensio historiarum*.[39]
3. Hugo Ambianensis, *Opusculum in Pentateuchum*.[40]
4. Lawrence of Durham, *Hypognosticon*.[41]

[38] An edition of the poem is in preparation by A.G. Rigg. *Incipit* of the prologue: *Scribere decreui decursum labilis eui. Incipit* of Genesis: "Ante creaturas tot secula totque figuras."

[39] *Alexandri Essebiensis Opera Poetica*, ed. G. Dinkova-Bruun, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 188A, Turnhout 2004, 1–149.

[40] Edition in J. Hümer, *Zur Geschichte der mittellateinischen Dichtung: Hugonis Ambianensis siue Ribomontensis Opuscula*, Vienna 1880.

[41] M.L. Mistretta, 'The *Hypognosticon* of Lawrence of Durham. A Preliminary Text with an Introduction', PhD thesis, New York 1941; and S. Daub, *Gottes Heilsplan-verdichtet. Edition des Hypognosticon des Laurentius Dunelmensis*, Erlangen-Jena 2002.

5. Leonius of Paris, *Historiae Veteris Testamenti*, not edited.[42]
6. Petrus Episcopus, *Vetus Testamentum uersibus latinis*, edited in an unpublished thesis.[43]
7. Petrus Riga, *Aurora.*[44]

2. *Biblical* carmina

8. Alan of Meaux, *Tractatus metricus de Susanna.*[45]
9. Altmannus of St. Florian, *Versus super Cantica*, not edited.[46]
10. Anonymous, *Cantica Canticorum Beate Marie.*[47]
11. Anonymous, *De natiuitate Christi*, not edited.[48]
12. Anonymous, *De Vetere et Nouo Testamento*, not edited.[49]
13. Anonymous, *Ecclesiastes.*[50]

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[42] P.G. Schmidt, 'Die Bibeldichtung des Leonius von Paris', in M. Ehrenfeuchter und Th. Ehlen (eds), *Als das wissend die meister wol. Beiträge zur Darstellung und Vermittlung von Wissen in Fachliteratur und Dichtung des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit: Walter Blank zum 65. Geburtstag*, Bern 2000, 253–260, where 143 verses from the beginning of Book IV are printed. The book of Ruth is edited in G. Dinkova-Bruun, 'Leonius of Paris and his *Liber Ruth*', in Rainer Berndt (ed), *Schrift, Schreiber, Schenker. Studien zur Abtei Sankt Viktor in Paris und den Viktorinern* (Corpus Victorinum. Instrumenta 1), Berlin 2005, 293–316. A critical edition of the entire poem is in preparation by G. Dinkova-Bruun.

[43] Petrus Episcopus, *Vetus Testamentum uersibus latinis*, ed. A. Emery, PhD thesis, École Nationale des Chartes 1995.

[44] *Aurora Petri Rigae Versificata*, ed. P. Beichner, 2 vols., Indiana 1965.

[45] J.H. Mozley, 'Susanna and the Elders: Three Medieval Poems', *Studi Medievali*, nuova serie 3 (1930), 27–52.

[46] *Incipit*: "Ardua presumens imitari gestio Petrum."

[47] P. Beichner, 'Cantica Canticorum Beate Marie', *Marianum. Ephemerides Mariologicae* XXI, fasc. II (1959), 1–15.

[48] The poem consists of 34 Leonine hexameters. It starts with the birth of John the Baptist and his life as precursor of Christ, gives a brief account of the annunciation and the birth of Christ, and ends with the arrival of the Magi. *Incipit*: "Nostrae uersiculis paucis eat ordo salutis." This composition is preserved in an anthology found in München, BSB, Clm 18580, fols. 59^{r}–90^{v}, esp. fol. 87^{rv}; see also numbers 12 and 19 in the handlist.

[49] The title of the poem raises false expectations. The piece has only 65 Leonine hexameters, of which 52 tell the story of the creation and fall of man, who is redeemed afterwards through Christ's sacrifice; the final 27 lines talk about the mission of the martyrs and the meaning of their suffering. *Incipit*: "Mane nouo mundi trahit hos conuentio nummi." This piece is preserved in the same Munich anthology (fols. 87^{v}–88^{r}), as the previous poem (no. 11 in the handlist); see also no. 19 in the handlist.

[50] G. Dinkova-Bruun, '*Liber Ecclesiastes*: An Anonymous Poem Incorporated in Peter Riga's *Aurora* (Ott. Lat. 399)', *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae* VIII (Studi e Testi 402, Città del Vaticano 2001), 159–172.

14. Anonymous, *Historiae quaedam euangelicae metrice*, only the first 70 verses are edited.[51]
15. Anonymous, *Lamentationes Ieremiae prophetae*, not edited.[52]
16. Anonymous, *Liber Esdre*, not edited.[53]
17. Anonymous, *Liber Esdre prophete*.[54]
18. Anonymous, *Liber Iosue*, non edited.[55]
19. Anonymous, *Poema de historia Veteris Testamenti*, not edited.[56]
20. Anonymous, *Prouerbia Salomonis*, not edited.[57]
21. Bernard of Cluny, *In libros Regum*.[58]
22. Godfrey of Winchester, *Versus de historiis Veteris Testamenti a morte Abel ad mortem Heli sacerdotis*, not edited.[59]
23. Guillelmus de Vivaria, *Carmen ad gratiam dilecte dilecti*, not edited.[60]
24. Hermann of Werden, *Hortus deliciarum Salomonis*.[61]
25. Ps.-Hildebert, *In libros Regum*, *De Machabaeis*, *De ordine mundi*, *In*

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[51] See Stella (n. 28), 451–453; in Stella's estimation the poem is ca. 1700 Leonine hexameters long. Unfortunately, the edited passage is too short to give us an idea of the precise contents of the work. The title provided in the present handlist is from the manuscript catalogue of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich.

[52] The poem is also called *Treni Ieremiae* and *Lamentationes Lamentationum*. *Incipit* of the prologue: "Sunt Cantica Canticorum, sunt Lamentationes Lamentationum." *Incipit* of the poem: "Aleph doctrinam notat et doctrina uocatur." The poem is added to Peter Riga's *Aurora* in more than 30 manuscripts.

[53] The poem is found in one manuscript as an addition to Peter Riga's *Aurora*. *Incipit*: "Persarum Cyrus rex primo scripsit in anno."

[54] G. Dinkova-Bruun, 'The Story of Ezra: A Versification Added to Peter Riga's *Aurora*', in S. Echard and G. Wieland (eds), *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage: Essays in Honour of A.G. Rigg on his 64th Birthday* (Publications of The Journal of Medieval Latin 4), Turnhout 2001, 163–188.

[55] *Incipit*: "Quid sit quod montem Moyses ascendit et inde."

[56] The poem has 165 Leonine hexameters, of which 115 are dedicated to the Book of Genesis, 33 to Exodus, and the last 17 to Numbers. *Incipit*: "Machina cum mundi communia seruat in undis." This composition is preserved in the same Munich anthology (fols. 89^{r}–90^{r}), as are numbers 11 and 12 in the handlist.

[57] *Incipit*: "Que docet iste liber prouerbia sunt Salomonis." An edition of the poem, by G. Dinkova-Bruun, is forthcoming in *Classica and Beneventana: Essays presented to Virginia Brown on the occasion of her 65th Birthday*.

[58] K. Halvarson, *Bernardi Cluniacensis Carmina De trinitate et de fide catholica, De castitate servanda, In libros Regum, De octo vitiis*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm 1963.

[59] *Incipit*: "De grege prima suo dicat sanctisssimus Abel."

[60] *Incipit* of the verse prologue: "Incipe iam uota mea mecum uirgo beata." *Incipit* of the poem: "Osculer os ore uerbum de patris amore."

[61] P.G. Schmidt, 'Der verschollene *Hortus deliciarum* des Hermann von Werden', in G. Bernt, F. Rädle, G. Silagi (eds), *Tradition und Wertung. Festschrift für Franz Brunhölzl zum 65. Gegurtstag*, Sigmarinen 1989, 261–266; contains an edition of the prologue and the first 32 verses. For the critical edition of the entire poem see *Hermanni Werdinensis 'Hortus*

primum caput Ecclesiastes, De incestuoso stupro ab Ammone propriae sorori Thamar illato.[62] See also the *Liber Regum*, of which only the prologue and the first 214 verses are edited.[63]

26. Marbod, *Carmina septem fratrum Machabaeorum, Naufragium Ionae prophetae, Liber Ruth, De raptu Dinae*.[64]
27. Matthew of Vendôme, *Tobias*.[65]
28. Petrus Heliae(?), *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*, not edited.[66]
29. Samuel Presbiter, verse commentary on Psalm I, not edited.[67]
30. Sigebert of Gembloux, *Commentarium in Ecclesiasten* (fragmenta).[68]

3. *Hexaemeral poems—poems which have as their central theme the story of Creation*

31. Andreas Sunonis, *Hexaemeron*.[69]
32. Anonymous, *Exameron*, not edited.[70]
33. Donizo of Canossa, *Enarratio Genesis*.[71]
34. Gregorius de Monte Sacro, *De hominum deificatione*.[72]
35. Odo of Tournai, *De operibus sex dierum*.[73]

Deliciarum', ed. P.G. Schmidt, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 204, Turnhout 2005. Excerpts from the poem are printed in Pitra (n. 32).

[62] PL 171, 1223–1234; 1239–1264; 1271–1276; 1293–1302; 1430–1431.

[63] F. Stella, 'Nuovi testi di poesia biblica fra XI e XII secolo: un secondo *Liber Regum* dello pseudo-Ildeberto. Testo del prologo e dei vv. 1–214', in Herren, McDonough, Arthur (n. 27), vol. 2, 410–435.

[64] PL 171, 1603–1608; 1678–1684.

[65] F. Munari, *Mathei Vindocinensis Opera*, vol. II (Roma 1982), 161–255.

[66] Prologue *incipit*: "Principium sine principio, fons sine fine." *Incipit* of the poem: "Oscula det sponsus, cessent oracula uatum."

[67] *Incipit*: "Qui non consiliis abiit que suasit iniquus."

[68] A. Boutemy, 'Fragments d'une oeuvre perdue de Sigebert de Gembloux (Le Commentaire métrique à l''Ecclesiaste')', *Latomus* 2 (1938), 196–220.

[69] Andreas Sunonis, *Hexaemeron*, ed. S. Ebbesen and L.B. Mortensen, vols. 1–2, Copenhagen 1985, 1988.

[70] Prologue *incipit*: "Omnia disponens nusquam metam sibi ponens." *Incipit* of the poem: "Summa uera bonum sed nec mutabile donum."

[71] I.S. Robinson, 'The Metrical Commentary on Genesis of Donizo of Canossa: Bible and Gregorian Reform', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 41 (1974), 12–37.

[72] The prose prologue to the poem is edited by E.C. Ronquist in the appendix to his article 'The Early-Thirteenth-Century Monastic Encyclopedia in Verse of Gregorius de Monte Sacro', *Studi Medievali* 29 (1988), 863–871. For a critical edition of the entire poem, see B. Pabst, *Gregor von Montesacro und die geistige Kultur Süditaliens unter Friedrich II*, Stuttgart 2002.

[73] PL 171, 1213–1218, among Hildebert's works.

4. *Secondary biblical paraphrases*

36. Baudri de Bourgueil, *Adelae comitissae*.[74]
37. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria noua*.[75]
38. Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandreis*.[76]

5. *Biblical verse* tituli, *epigrams, compilations*

39. Anonymous biblical anthology from York Minster Library.[77]
40. Anonymous biblical epitome, *De omnibus libris*, included in a copy of Peter Riga's *Aurora*, not edited.[78]
41. Anonymous, *Pictor in Carmine*, edited in unpublished thesis.[79]
42. Baudri de Bourgueil, *tituli* (poems 125, 224, 243, 246–249 etc.).[80]
43. Hildebert, Biblical Epigrams.[81]
44. Petrus Riga, *Floridus Aspectus*.[82]

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[74] P. Abrahams, *Baudri de Bourgueil, Œuvres poétique*, Paris 1926, as *carmen* CXCVI, and K. Hilbert, *Baldricus Burgulianus, Carmina*, Heidelberg 1979, as *carmen* 134.

[75] E. Faral, *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et XIIIe siècle*, Paris 1924, 194–262. See also *Ars versificatoria (The art of the versemaker): Matthew of Vendôme*, trans. R. Parr, Milwaukee 1981.

[76] M. Colker, *Galteri de Castellione Alexandreis*, Padova 1978, 98–103.

[77] G. Dinkova-Bruun, 'Medieval Latin Poetic Anthologies (VII): The Biblical Anthology from York Minster Library (Ms. XVI Q 14)', *Mediaeval Studies* 64 (2002), 61–109. The longest piece in the anthology (213 hexameters) is the previously unknown poem *De decollatione sancti Iohannis Baptiste*. This unusual composition will be discussed below.

[78] This interesting poem is found in Ms. Paris, BnF, Ms. Lat. 13050, fols. 62^{r}–63^{v}. In only 272 verses the poem goes through both the New and the Old Testament (only the Psalms and some of the sapiential books are missing). *Incipit*: "Tocius ergo libri breuius tibi tradita summa." The title is provisional, based on a marginal note in the manuscript.

[79] D. Baker, *Pictor in Carmine uel Adaptatio rerum gestarum in Veteri Testamento ad Nouum: a critical edition*, PhD Thesis, Toronto 1991.

[80] See above (n. 74).

[81] A.B. Scott, D.F. Baker, A.G. Rigg, 'The Biblical Epigrams of Hildebert of Le Mans: A Critical Edition', *Mediaeval Studies* 47 (1985), 272–316.

[82] Riga's collection was printed originally among Hildebert's works in PL 171, 1381A–1412B; since then Riga's authorship has been established definitively. See A. Boutemy, "Recherches sur *Floridus Aspectus* de Pierre la Rigge", *Le Moyen Age* 54 (1948), 89–112; A. Boutemy, "Recherches sur le *Floridus Aspectus* II" and "Recherches sur le *Floridus Aspectus* III", *Latomus* 8 (1949), 159–168 and 283–301.

6. *Anomalous cases—biblical poems, but not biblical versifications*

45. Alexander de Villa Dei, *Summarium biblicum*, not edited.[83]
46. Anonymous, *Capitula euangeliorum uersifice*, not edited.[84]
47. Samuel Presbiter, *Collecta euangeliorum*, not edited.[85]

The corpus of biblical verse presented above is both very large and very varied. Three main questions will be addressed on the following pages. First, how is this corpus different from the production of the poets from the earlier periods? Second, how do the twelfth- and thirteenth-century versifiers treat the Bible? Do they use it primarily as a historical source and, thus, as a basis for literal exegesis, or are they more interested in unraveling the deeper meaning of the biblical narrative by providing its allegorical interpretation? And third, are there any poems that are composed with aims altogether different than presenting exegetical knowledge?

V.1. *Distinguishing characteristics of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century biblical versifications*

A great interest in versifying the Bible manifested itself in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. This development was closely associated with the rise of monastic and cathedral schools and the wish of masters to teach their students all they needed to know in order to become good priests and preachers; the number of students was steadily growing as well. As a result, new steps were taken towards organizing the vast field of already existing knowledge and making it more accessible to the new, much larger student body.[86] Poetry, with its undeniable didactic and mnemonic qualities, played a leading role in these efforts: verse encyclopedias were composed, verse grammars written, and verse anthologies compiled.[87] Even more importantly, exegesis and theology

[83] In some manuscript the *Summarium* is also called *Vniuersa Biblia sacra synoptice* or *Compendium Bibliae. Incipit*: "Sex. Prohibet. Peccant. Abel. Enoc. Et archa fit. Intrant."

[84] *Incipit*: "Abraham. Sponsato. Nollet traducere. Donec."

[85] *Incipit*: "Leprosum tetigit Christus sic omnia munda."

[86] J. Goering, *William de Montibus (c. 1140–1213). The Schools and the Literature of Pastoral Care*, Toronto 1992, 67–72.

[87] V. Law, 'Why Write A Verse Grammar?', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 9 (1999), 46–76; and G. Dinkova-Bruun, 'Notes on Poetic composition in the Theological Schools ca. 1200 and the Latin Poetic Anthology from Ms. Harley 956: A Critical Edition', *Sacris Erudiri* 43 (2004), 299–391.

were skillfully interwoven into the verse, giving to the reader in a nutshell what he needed to know.

The fascination of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with biblical narrative is also connected to renewed interest, at that time, in the historical significance of the Bible—an interest that culminated in Peter Comestor's *Historia scolastica*—and to the rhetorical education and practice best demonstrated in theoretical works such as Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria* and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*.

Thus there was a revival in the genre of biblical versification, and the number of longer biblical poems became considerable again after the relatively low count during the Carolingian period and the eleventh century. One might talk about a 'new wave' of biblical versification, which, however, differs in several respects from the previous literary endeavours in the field. Many of the new compositions can again be classified as 'full-scale' biblical versifications, and yet these poems have little in common with their late antique predecessors.[88]

The first significant difference is in the choice of metre. While the late antique biblical poets used elegiac couplets only in the verse prologues and epilogues of their works, the versifiers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries accepted them on an equal basis with the hexameter. As a result, four of the seven 'full scale' biblical versifications of the period are written in elegiacs: Lawrence's *Hypognosticon*, Hugh's *Opusculum in Pentateuchum*, Riga's *Aurora*, and Alexander of Ashby's *Breuissima comprehensio historiarum*. Among the shorter works, about half are written in elegiacs. This change in the choice of metre is discussed by Wolfgang Kirsch, who explains that Bede called the elegiac couplets *versus heroici*, thus endorsing them for use in 'epic' compositions.[89] More likely is the influence of the Carolingian *versus de bibliotheca*, which was often written in elegiacs and which, as explained above, was used to present the order and contents of the books of the Bible. I believe that the twelfth- and thirteenth-century poets adopted this very convenient form and its metre, but changed its prefatory character by adding to the contents of the genre the exegetical and allegorical material of their own time. Apart from its influence on the metre of the later 'full-scale' biblical versifications, the survival of the 'Alcuinian' type of *versus de bibliotheca* is

[88] See numbers 1 to 7 in the handlist of versifications presented in section IV of this article.

[89] W. Kirsch, 'Probleme der Gattungsentwicklung am Beispiel des Epos', *Philologus* 126 (1982), 265–288.

attested in this period by two biblical ekphrases, one in Baudri de Bourgueil's *Carmen Adelae comitissae*, the other in the fourth book of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*.[90] On the other hand, the 'Theodulfian' type of *versus de bibliotheca* is continued in the work of Alexander of Ashby and the other poets who wrote mnemonic verses. Finally, the genre of biblical verse *tituli* finds its direct continuation in Hildebert's biblical epigrams, Baudri de Bourgueil's *tituli*, the anonymous *Pictor in carmine*, and Peter Riga's biblical verses in the *Floridus Aspectus*.[91] In this context, the biblical anthology from the Cathedral Library in York deserves special mention. Not only is this compilation copied in a large collection of biblical verse, but contrary to other anthologies it contains carefully chosen and often original poems based uniquely on biblical episodes.[92] Also, the short poetic compositions included in this anthology exemplify very well the epigrammatic tradition of biblical versification.

The second difference between the biblical versifications of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and their late antique predecessors is the length of the poems: the later poets wrote enormous compositions. The only late antique versifier who comes close is Ps.-Cyprian with his 5410 hexameters,[93] but even he is far behind Leonius of Paris (14000 verses), Adam of Barking (15000), Peter Riga (15000), Gregorius de Monte Sacro (13000), or Hermann of Werden (20000). Perhaps the fascination of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with compiling, organizing, and making sense of history is the explanation for this pattern. Anthologies, encyclopedias, chronicles, and scholastic treatises were eagerly written in the period. In this intellectual context, it is understandable that biblical poets wished to provide their contemporaries with the fullest and most up to date account of the accomplishments in the study of the Bible. Their poems were intended predominantly as teaching tools, but also as mnemonic devices and literary exercises—though one wonders how useful for memorization are 14000 or 20000 verses that often do not even cover the whole Bible.

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[90] See numbers 36 and 38 in the handlist.

[91] See numbers 41–43 in the handlist.

[92] The anthology contains 113 poems. Fourteen of them are inspired by Old Testament themes (the six days of creation, Noah's ark, the ten plagues of Egypt, etc.), while the rest tell the story of Christ in a sequence of short epigrams. Unique to this compilation are many short epigrams dedicated to Christ's death and resurrection. See (n. 77). See number 39 in the handlist.

[93] Ps.-Cyprian is rather an exception. The rest of the late antique epics are between 1700 and 3200 hexameters long: Arator wrote 2326 lines, Juvencus 3185, Sedulius 1753, Victorius 2020, and Avitus 2582.

This extreme verbosity is counterbalanced by an opposite trend, also typical of this period: the twelfth- and thirteenth-century poets not only wrote the longest biblical versifications in literary history, but also the shortest verse epitomes of the Bible. There is hardly any doubt that Alexander de Villa Dei's *Summarium biblicum* in 200 hexameters and the anonymous *De omnibus libris* in 272 hexameters are enviable examples of brevity.[94]

We can observe a third difference as well: unlike Juvencus, Arator, or Severus Episcopus in Late Antiquity, very few poets in twelfth and the thirteenth centuries present the text of the New Testament historical books (i.e. the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles) outside a larger biblical frame. The story of Christ's life and the baptismal activities of his disciples are dealt with only when included in a versification of the whole Bible, as can be seen in Lawrence's *Hypognosticon*, Peter Riga's *Aurora*, and Alexander of Ashby's *Breuissima comprehensio historiarum*; the rest of the poets focus on the Old Testament. Leonius of Paris versifies the books of the Octateuch, Hugo Ambianensis those of the Pentateuch, and Petrus Episcopus ends his poem with the Book of Maccabees. The other poets either versify only one of the Old Testamental books, for example, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Edsra,[95] or make a self-contained poem of a single story taken out of its biblical context, for example, Marbod's *Carmina septem fratrum Machabaeorum*, *Naufragium Ionae prophetae*, and *De raptu Dinae*, or Alan of Meaux' *Tractatus metricus de Susanna*. In few cases, events from the New Testament are narrated independently (see the anonymous *De natiuitate Christi*, the *De decollatione Iohannis Baptiste*, and possibly the *Historiae quaedam euangelicae metrice*),[96] but these three examples are not enough to change the overall picture. It seems that themes from the Gospels were included in the biblical versifications of the period only when the poets were concerned with allegorical exegesis and typology. Versifying the life of Christ simply as a historical narrative was clearly considered unnecessary. Everybody was familiar with the story of Jesus: his birth, passion, and resurrection were commemorated and celebrated by the most important feasts in the liturgical calendar. Juvencus and Arator needed to present the not

[94] See numbers 40 and 45 in the handlist. Alexander's *Summarium* will be discussed further below. Unsurpassable, of course, is Hugh Primas, who summarized the entire human history of fall and redemption in two verses; see A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 1066–1422*, Cambridge 1992, 132.

[95] See numbers 13, 16, 17, 20, 24, and 30 in the handlist.

[96] See numbers 11, 14, and 39 in the handlist.

yet widely known life of the Saviour to their contemporaries in a literary form they knew and loved; Riga and Adam of Barking had no such concerns. Instead, their aim was to glorify the eternal significance of Christ's sacrifice for all Christian believers.

V.2. *Thematic organization of the material*

We shall see next how the biblical poems of the period can be organized thematically. Central to the poets' interest continues to be, not surprisingly, the significance of the Fall-Redemption link, whose importance for Christian salvation was reinforced daily by the liturgy. Nevertheless, the strategies the poets used to present this all-important idea are very different. The biblical poetry of the period can be divided into two groups taking two distinct but related routes while expressing contemporary understanding of the meaning of the biblical narrative.

The first group of works can be called purely 'historical', including poems in which no allegorical interpretation is added to the biblical narrative. The existence of these works is closely related to the renewed interest in the significance of human and sacred history expressed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which is also the reason for the widespread study of the literal sense of the Bible in these times. This historical trend manifests itself in two ways: first, through the arrangement of the biblical material according to the Six Ages of the World, that is, the Ages of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Christ;[97] and second, by biblical poems that deal with individual historical events, such as the creation of the world, the reign of the biblical kings, the spiritual leadership of Esdra, the fights of the Maccabean brothers, or the birth of Jesus.[98] Some of these compositions, which are generally shorter than the poems in this group, are very emotional, presenting the biblical episodes as moving stories of universal human significance; Marbod's *De raptu Dinae* and *Liber Ruth* are good examples.[99] In this connection an interesting poetic work should be mentioned, namely, the unusual *Planctus* of Peter Abelard.[100] If John the Deacon's

[97] See Lawrence of Durham, Peter Riga, Alexander of Ashby, Adam of Barking, Leonius of Paris, and Gregorius de Monte Sacro (numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 34 in the handlist).

[98] For examples of these themes see numbers 11, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, 31, 33, and 35 in the handlist.

[99] See number 26 in the handlist.

[100] G. Vecchi (ed), *I "Planctus" di Pietro Abelardo: introduzione, testo critico, transcrizioni*

Cena Cypriani and Theodulus' *Ecloga* were the most original of the Carolingian biblical compositions, the same can be said for Abelard's *Planctus* in this later period. The very personal and particularly moving songs of Dina, Joseph, and Jephta stand apart from everything that biblical poetry has ever achieved.[101]

Even though all poems included in this group of 'historical' works versify the biblical narrative, their approach to it varies. In some cases the poets remain faithful to the text of the Bible, even though abbreviating it (for instance, Alexander of Ashby), in some other cases they expand and supplement it with additional source material. One example here is Leonius of Paris, who moves beyond the biblical text while remaining in the biblical narrative. Leonius accepts the reality behind the biblical letter and amplifies it with additional details borrowed from other historical sources, such as Flavius Josephus and Peter Comestor. Very much in the tradition of Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor and their historical expositions on various biblical books, Leonius (also a Victorine, albeit a less famous one) regards both the Bible and other historical writings as bearing witness to the historical truth. But this is not all. By corroborating the biblical text with additional historical detail, Leonius gives the events signified by the biblical letter greater historical value. One should know all about this letter and the historical reality it reflects, before moving to allegory—this is clearly the statement of the majority of the twelfth-century Victorine scholars. For them the literal sense of the Bible was a rich field of all-encompassing meaning, which had to be not only explored and explained, but also decoded and expanded with all available contemporary knowledge. Leonius' poem provides us with very interesting insight into what the literal or historical sense of the Bible meant for the twelfth-century writers. We need to study this aspect much more thoroughly than has been done so far.

The poems in the second group are concerned with explaining the allegorical meaning of the biblical narrative; the works in this category are numerous. They all start from the literal level of meaning, but move on to explore a deeper significance. The best examples of this treat-

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musicali, Modena 1951. For more discussion and further bibliography on the topic, see J. Ziolkowski, 'Women's Lament and the Neuming of the Classics', in J. Haines and R. Rosenfeld (eds), *Music and Medieval Manuscripts. Paleography and Performance*, Ashgate 2004, 129–150, esp. 142–143.

[101] Since Abelard's *Planctus*, similarly to the *Cena Cypriani*, is rhythmical, it appears that the poets felt more free to experiment while writing *rythmi* than while composing metrical poems. It would be interesting to explore why this might be the case.

ment of the Bible are Peter Riga's *Aurora* and Petrus Episcopus' *Vetus Testamentum uersibus latinis*, the *Aurora* being a real medieval 'bestseller', whereas the *Vetus Testamentum uersibus latinis* was, and still is, virtually unknown. These biblical versifications are basically verse commentaries on the Bible. The biblical events are reported briefly and are then followed by lengthy allegorical and moral interpretations borrowed from a large number of authorities, such as Gregory the Great, Isidore, Bede, Rabanus Maurus, and Bruno of Segni. For additional historical detail Riga turned to Peter Comestor and Flavius Josephus. With its clear language and logical composition, the *Aurora* was immediately recognized as the most useful digest of biblical scholarship of its time, and no biblical versification ever surpassed it in popularity.

The verse commentaries on the biblical *Song of Songs* occupy a special place among the allegorical poems. As already mentioned, this specific branch of biblical poetry began in the eleventh century with the *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum* by Williram of Ebersberg, but it reached its height in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when at least four verse commentaries on the *Cantica* were composed: the *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum* by Peter Heliae, the *Carmen ad gratiam dilecte dilecti* by Guillelmus de Vivaria, the *Versus super Cantica* by Altmannus of St. Florian, and the anonymous *Cantica Canticorum Beate Marie*.[102] The numerous medieval prose commentaries on the *Song of Songs* have been studied by previous scholars,[103] but there are still no studies on the poetic tradition.

In the thirteenth century some of the biblical poets composed their poetry to serve as mnemonic devices. The best examples of this trend are the *Collecta evangeliorum* by Samuel Presbiter, the *Breuissima comprehensio* by Alexander of Ashby, the *Summarium biblicum* by Alexander de Villa Dei, and the anonymous *Capitula euangeliorum*.[104] Despite their common purpose, these compositions are very different. Samuel's *Collecta* is a useful compendium of authoritative statements on some of the most

[102] See numbers 9, 10, 23, and 28 in the handlist.

[103] H. Riedlinder, 'Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche in den lateinischen Hoheliedkommentaren des Mittelalters', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters* Bd. 38.3, Aschendorff 1958; F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien. Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis um 1200*, Wiesbaden 1958; R. Herde, 'Das Hohelied in der lateinishen Literatur des Mittelalters bis zum 12. Jahrhundert', *Studi Medievali* 3rd. ser. 8 (1967), 957–1073; E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of my Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, Philadelphia 1990; and recently R. Guglielmetti, 'Il commento al Cantico dei Cantici di Alcuino di York: appunti per un'edizione', in C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (eds), *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, Firenze, 2005, 143–155.

[104] See numbers 2, 45, 46, and 47 in the handlist.

important Christian doctrinal topics. Alexander of Ashby's *Comprehensio* is a concise verse presentation of the historical books of the Bible, having much in common with the biblical *tituli* in verse. Alexander de Villa Dei's *Summarium biblicum* and the anonymous *Capitula euangeliorum* are most unusual. Their texts represent incomprehensible strings of key words which form perfect hexameters, nevertheless, and which are meant to work as mental bells reminding the reader of the biblical story they refer to. For example, Alexander de Villa Dei compresses the whole Bible into 200 hexameters, of which only 9 are dedicated to the Book of Genesis.[105] This unusual but at the same time extremely popular mnemonic composition is still unedited. The same is true also for the anonymous *Capitula euangeliorum*.

In addition to the four examples presented above, there are numerous short anonymous mnemonic poems, mostly unpublished, on the order of the biblical books, the number of their chapters, the ten plagues of Egypt, or the Ten Commandments. Also, all the verse epigrams composed in the period possess mnemonic qualities. Among them, the most popular were undoubtedly Hildebert's biblical epigrams and the anonymous *Pictor in carmine*,[106] the former copied repeatedly in medieval poetic collections, the latter used as a source of captions for visual biblical representations.

Finally, three more compositions need to be mentioned, as representing a different approach to the biblical narrative: Gregorius de Monte Sacro's *De hominum deificatione*, the anonymous *Exameron*, and the anonymous *De decollatione Iohannis Baptiste*.[107] In these works the biblical story is used only as a starting point. In the *De hominum deificatione* and the *Exameron*, the six days of creation are the frame within which the author includes all contemporary knowledge of the natural world (i.e. stars,

[105] This how Genesis looks in Alexander's *Summarium*:

Sex. Prohibet. Peccant. Abel. Enoc. Et archa fit. Intrant.
Egreditur. Dormit. Variantur. Turris. Et Abram.
Loth. Reges. Credidit. Fuga. Circumcisio. Risus.
Sulphur. Rex Gerarae. Parit. Offert. Sara. Rebecca.
Post geminos. Putei. Benedicit. Scala. Sorores.
Virgas. Abscedit. Luctatur. Gratia. Dyna.
Beniamin. Gens Esau. Vendunt. Thamar. Impia. Tres. Tres.
Preficitur. Veniunt. Redeunt. Post tristia. Noscunt.
Omne genus. Quintam. Languet. Benedictio. Ioseph.

[106] See numbers 41 and 43 in the handlist.
[107] See numbers 32, 34, and 39 in the handlist.

plants, animals, precious stones, bodily fluids, etc.), thus creating encyclopedias in verse rather than a biblical account. In the *De decollatione*, the death of John the Baptist is the event that prompts the poet's acerbic attack on the perfidy of women.

VI. *Conclusions*

From everything said above it becomes clear that the genre of biblical versification went through different periods of development and modification. It began with the compositions of the late antique poets Juvencus, Ps.-Cyprianus, Sedulius, Victorius, and Avitus, who created a corpus of biblical epic regarded as canonical in the centuries that followed. Among these texts, the most influential in the Carolingian period was the verse life of Christ by Sedulius, which played a decisive role in the transformation of the epic genre into verse hagiography.

Even though the Carolingian period did not produce many metrical versifications of the Bible, with Odo of Cluny and Florus of Lyons among the few writing in the genre, the ninth and tenth centuries saw the creation of the new genre *versus de bibliotheca*, which lent its form and style to many of the biblical versifications written in the following centuries.

After interest in versification of the Bible was renewed in the eleventh century, the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries became the period in which the genre flourished. It developed in many directions, covering different aspects of the constantly expanding knowledge of the Bible. These versifications could take the form of a historical narrative (Ps.-Hildebert, Leonius of Paris, Lawrence of Durham, and Alexander of Ashby), an allegorical commentary in verse (Peter Heliae, Guillelmus de Vivaria, Peter Riga, Petrus Episcopus, and Altmannus of St. Florian), a didactic treatise (Andreas Sunonis), a mnemonic device (Alexander de Villa Dei), or a verse encyclopedia (Gregorius de Monte Sacro and the anonymous *Exameron)*.

It is also worth noting that in the twelfth century England emerged for the first time as a centre of composition of biblical poetry in Latin on an equal basis with the continent. All the late antique biblical poets were from the continent, as were all Carolingian and eleventh-century ones. The decisive change occurred after the Norman Conquest, when new stylistic models imported by the Normans dictated the literary developments in both prose and poetry. Following the new trends, the

Anglo-Latin poets of the period had no need of a continental patron, but remained in England, where their compositions could satisfy the new intellectual needs of their contemporaries. As a result, Peter Riga, Leonius of Paris, and Andreas Sunonis are matched, perhaps not in length, but certainly in richness of ideas and ambition, by Lawrence of Durham, Adam of Barking, and Alexander of Ashby. With respect to biblical *carmina*, the continent produced more examples—in the poems of Ps.-Hildebert, Marbod, Bernard of Cluny, Odo of Tournai, Donizo of Canossa; but England also had its representatives in Godfrey of Winchester and Alan of Meaux.

In this brief survey it has been possible to outline only the main lines of the development of the genre of biblical versification, excluding the shorter biblical poems (i.e. *carmina*, mnemonic verses, proverbs, and riddles) that were written in abundance during each period. With their variety of topics and aims, however, these shorter poems too show the originality of their creators and the richness of verse transformation of the biblical text as a literary phenomenon.[108]

Altogether, one has to disagree with Curtius, who claimed that the biblical poets of the Middle Ages had nothing original to say.[109] Even though poets worked on the same text for centuries, they always found new ways of presenting the biblical material and ever continued to devise new ways of making the Bible relevant to their contemporaries. The work of these poets provides a highly significant and much neglected point of entry into the mind of medieval intellectuals and authors, as well as insight into the most important aspect of western medieval culture: the influence of the Bible on the life of every Christian believer, for whose salvation Jesus suffered and died on the cross.

[108] See, for example, Alan of Meaux (number 8 in the handlist), who presents the story of Susanna as though happening in a medieval courtroom, thus adding elements of verisimilitude to the narrative; or the anonymous *Cantica Canticorum Beate Marie* (number 10 in the handlist), which bears witness to the increasing popularity of the devotion to Virgin Mary in the thirteenth century by limiting itself to the Marian interpretation of the biblical Canticle.

[109] Curtius (n. 2), 36.

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